

TOWARDS MONGOLIA'S LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT POLICY VISION 2050:

Advancing education equity, efficiency and outcomes



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Advancing education equity, efficiency and outcomes

**A Synthesis Report by the Ministry of Education,
Culture, Science and Sports**

2020

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List of Acronyms

ADB.	Asian Development Bank
CBT.	Competency Based Training
CRC.	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSWE.	Center for Social Work Excellence
ECE.	Early Childhood Education
ESD.	Education for Sustainable Development
ESDC.	Education and Social Development Center of Mongolia
ESMP.	Education Sector Master Plan
ESIS.	Education Sector Information System
GDP.	Gross Domestic Product
GER.	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GoM.	Government of Mongolia
GPE.	Global Partnership for Education
GSE.	General School Education
HE.	Higher Education
HEI.	Higher Education Institution
LMIC.	Low- and Middle-Income Countries
MECSS.	Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sports
MIER.	Mongolian Institute for Education Research
NER.	Net Enrolment Ratio
NSO.	National Statistics Office
ODL.	Open Distance Learning
PISA.	Programme for International Student Assessment
TVET.	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
VET.	Vocational Education and Training

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mongolia has achieved remarkable progress in education over the last 25 years. Drawing from recently completed sub-sector studies, this report synthesizes and analyzes education outcomes with a view to identifying the main priorities for strengthening the education sector in support of Mongolia's Long Term Development Policy - Vision 2050. The extensive education sector analysis was comprised of numerous quantitative and qualitative studies and reports that each identified important issues and offered pertinent recommendations for Mongolia's education sector. This education synthesis report presents the key findings from the reports and aims to add value to the volume of work by taking a sector perspective. To that end, the report is organized around five sector challenges: access, equity, outcomes, efficiency and governance. The synthesis provides the state of play and offers prioritized policy recommendations.

The Government of Mongolia is eager to sharpen its competitive edge in the global economy. Against this backdrop, it has outlined its Vision 2050. The 2050 Vision aims to harness Mongolia's human capital by building on the momentum accrued through system-wide reform and move closer towards a system that ensures education quality and relevance at all levels with shared responsibility, sustainable governance and management. The education synthesis report structure is well aligned with the thrust of the 2050 Vision, which acknowledges that low quality has hampered sector outcomes and development in the past and emphasizes quality within the sector as a cross-cutting issue. The measures set out in the 2050 Vision call for a shift towards student-centered education and an overall strengthening of teachers' capacities to deliver under this new paradigm. Lastly, the 2050 Vision recognizes that increasing the education sector's contribution to economic growth and development necessitates greater emphasis on governance and management. As such, it envisions the sector building stable roots in its human capacity and strengthened sector institutions.

Mongolia has achieved impressively high rates of enrollment in education. Education access strategies have been implemented with success, particularly in relation to basic education, where enrollment rates are nearly universal at 98.5% (UIS, 2019). Pre-school coverage is almost 70% among children aged between 3-5 years old. While Mongolia upholds high participation rates, there is still room to improve education access. The most disadvantaged remain excluded from formal pre-schools, particularly in rural areas, and among the nomadic herder population. There is an urgent need to test and deploy home-based modalities of early childhood education, particularly within the household environment, and develop a quality assurance mechanism to monitor compliance with standards in order to rectify the urban-rural quality gap. Investments are also needed to expand kindergarten services in urban areas, preparing for an expanded role of the private sector.

Socio-economic and geographical disparities persist within the system. Children from poor and herder households, and minority group children have lower access to early childhood education. Evidence also reveals urban-rural disparities and inequitable in infrastructure provision. The low quality of boarding facilities for herder children is a key barrier to their access and retention. There is also disparity in learning outcomes between urban and rural settings which, in part, is due to the variance in teaching and learning materials. While gender disparities are not stark, they are particularly persistent at the upper secondary level as girls' transition at a higher rate than boys. In terms of learning, girls outperform boys. While women outperform and out-number men at the secondary and university levels in Mongolia, they are under-represented and underpaid in the labor market.

Effectively harnessing human capital requires building knowledge and skills and expanding the capabilities of learners. Poor learning outcomes are hindering the education sector in Mongolia. As revealed by the high percentage of children with low scores on assessment tests—only 41.2% proficient in mathematics, 37.6% in Mongolian language studies, and 46.4% in social studies at grade 5 (Education Quality Assessment 2018)—improving education quality and learning at all grades is a key challenge for the system.¹ Disaggregated data on learning outcomes reveal that there is a significant learning gap between urban and rural school students—with soum school students lagging their peers in urban areas. In terms of achievement by socio-economic group, learning results among nomadic and minority children are also considerably lower. The lower quality of early childhood education in rural areas further widens the gap with weaker foundational skills. To fulfill its promise to build human capital in support of Vision 2050, the education system must generate learning.

Strong efforts are needed to address teaching and learning gaps. Prior to entering the classroom, some teachers are inadequately trained as the higher education institutions responsible for pre-service teacher training offer different, unaccredited pedagogical curricula which affects the quality of graduates. The inconsistency of in-service training and frequent changes to the teaching curriculum compromise the competency of teachers in the classroom. The degree of alignment between the intended, implemented and attained curriculum is often weak and is further weakened by the limited availability of teaching and learning materials. The system does not contain robust learning assessments that feature in-built feedback mechanisms. As such, results are not widely shared nor disseminated to key audiences meaning they are not used as a basis for improvement to the curriculum, teaching practice and classroom interactions. Given that the Government of Mongolia and the Ministry of Education, Cultures, Science and Sport recognize the importance of improving the quality of education, considerable investments need to be made in the determinants of quality education: a relevant and coherent curriculum, teachers' content knowledge and teaching practices, access to learning materials, resource availability and robustness and sustainability of the learning assessment system.

Improving internal efficiency should appeal to policymakers, particularly in light of the fiscal pressure facing the system. Although output measures related to the flow of students through the system such as enrollment, transition and completion rates, are high and dropout and repetition rates are low, they mask the efficiency challenges within the system. As such, these indicators cannot provide real guidance to the efficiency of the system. Mongolia has effectively executed policies that increase the amount of schooling and continuation rates through the system, unfortunately and unintendedly the expansion has been at the expense of learning. In addition to national learning assessments, which reflect poor outcomes, the World Bank's Human Capital Index (HCI) calculates that the quality-adjusted learning years is just 9.4 years out of 13.6 average years of schooling. Children are in school but not learning for nearly 4.2 years. More extensive and robust efficiency analysis, including unit costs analyses, was not undertaken through the education sector analytical studies. However, the available data reflects that the internal efficiency of education can be improved in three ways; (i) improve learning outcomes starting with strengthening functional literacy and numeracy; (ii) improve transition rates between lower and upper secondary; and (iii) more efficient utilization of resources, including the rationalization of Student Teacher Ratios (STRs).

¹ Primary and Education Sector Analysis, 2019. Page 35.

The total public spending on education represents 5% of GDP and at 15.3% of government expenditure, spending is aligned with high-income countries although it is below the GPE benchmark of 20%. On average, around 85% of all spending between 2014 and 2018 was on recurrent costs, with the remaining 15% on capital expenditure.² Of the total education sector budget, 46% is spent on general education, 23% on early childhood education, 9% on higher education, 4% on TVET, and 18% on education sector management.³ Representing less than 1% of the recurrent budget, expenditure on learning materials is extremely low and parental contributions and local government often top-up to cover the gap. Given that the capacity to generate local resources varies greatly, in rural and poor urban settings learning materials that aid cognitive development are scarce or in poor condition. Apart from the dearth of learning materials, spending on improving learning environments is limited. In 2018 only 5.3% of capital expenditure was spent on maintenance and repairs to existing facilities. This points to inefficient expenditure planning and under-investment in school facilities over a prolonged period will result in much higher costs down the line.

Greater efficiency in education spending can be realized through improved transparency, strengthened resource allocation measures and expansion of the degree to which schools are empowered to make decisions. The World Bank's Public Expenditure Review noted the need for greater transparency and monitoring of the capital budget investment and spending on school equipment. Furthermore, according to other reports, critical data such as the coefficient for state-owned schools is often not taken into account when spending decisions are made.⁴ While the disbursement of funds is efficient and transparent, local governments and schools have little or no margin to plan or budget according to their needs. While there is a system in place to apply for reallocation of funds across budget lines, according to reports the process is cumbersome.⁵ By enabling the meaningful participation of local stakeholders in the school planning process, Mongolia could potentially build on proven school-based management approaches to enhance efficiency and improve learning outcomes.

To enhance the competitiveness of the workforce and its ability to contribute to a more diversified economy as envisioned, industry linkages with higher education need to be cultivated. At the TVET level, efforts have been made to strengthen the education content using a competency-based approach, but the process has been slow and is pending completion. With a view to making education supply more relevant for market demand, both in TVET and higher education, increased partnerships between education institutions and the private sector are required. The policy reforms in the TVET sub-sector have delivered some results, including an effective expansion of teaching approaches that has made it more accessible for marginalized groups such as unemployed youth, youth from poor families, women and people with disabilities. While the system has expanded provision, there are insufficient and/or deficient quality assurance mechanisms-licensing, accreditation, inspection and certification. Reports suggest that TVET graduates do not meet the requirements of employers. As for other sub-sectors, inadequate attention has been given to ensuring the quality and relevance in higher education. The higher education sub-sector is operating without a national qualification framework to guide its development along quality standards. For both TVET and Higher Education, there is need to cultivate linkages with the labor market.

² Education Finance and Investment, 2019. Page 7.

³ Education, Finance and Investment Review. Page 22.

⁴ Education, Finance and Investment Review. Page 12.

⁵ Mongolia: Public Expenditure Review, 2019. Page 110.

Advancing equity, efficiency and outcomes in the education sector towards the Sustainable Development Vision 2050 will require implementation of reforms that address key challenges within the system that, if addressed, could serve as the drivers of change towards a more efficient, accountable and results-oriented system. This report acknowledges the depth of recommendations presented through the sub-sector studies and the initiatives outlined by the Government of Mongolia through the education sector policy priorities, strategies and activities such as the Education Sector Medium-term Development Plan (2021-2030). Four broad tasks are essential for improving the Mongolian education system, include ensuring equitable access, addressing education quality and learning outcomes and enhancing management efficiency and accountability.

INTRODUCTION

i. Report background

This report seeks to synthesize and analyze education outcomes with a view of identifying the main priorities for strengthening the education sector in support of Mongolia's Sustainable Development Vision 2050. The report highlights data and findings generated from a series of source reports (see bibliography) related to the goals and targets set out in the Vision 2050. The report is composed of six thematic chapters: Access; Equity; Internal Efficiency, Education Cost and Finance; External Efficiency; Management. Each chapter will include an overview of the current situation and recent development with a focus on, key achievements and persistent challenges. As a synthesis report, the information on each topic is not exhaustive but rather seeks to present key findings. Specific activities highlighted in the Vision 2050 have been included at the beginning of each chapter and a complete mapping by activity is annexed (Annex 1. Vision 2050 Chapter mapping).

This synthesis report draws on conclusions, finding, data and surveys produced in collaboration with MECSS by the Asian Development Bank, the Global Partnership for Education and the World Bank. The synthesis also draws from key UNESCO reports. The scope, research, and focus of the source reports differ, and precise findings are, on occasions, incongruent however the overall conclusions are fundamentally compatible. Whereas most of the source reports focus on one or two key stages, the synthesis report seeks to extract cross-cutting and/or recurring challenges that have an impact, positive or negative, on equity, efficiency and outcomes which ultimately may contribute to the implementation of Vision 2050.

Mongolia's State Education Policy (2014-2024) states: "Education is the main key factor of each citizen's lifelong support and guarantee of life quality, and of the State's societal and economical, science and technological development, and guarantee of national independence and security. Mongolian State shall develop education as a leading sector in society".

ii. Mongolia's long-term development policy Vision 2050 and the Education sector

Mongolia's long-term development policy - Vision 2050 - places a strong focus on the reduction of poverty and the move towards a more inclusive economic growth. Sustainable development is defined throughout the 2050 Vision in relation to social development, including gender equality, and improved quality of life as well as improvements in safety of the living environment for citizens. The focus areas within the 2050 Vision build on one another and aim to mutually reinforce development efforts. The priority areas include: Common National Values, Human Development, Quality of Life and Middle-Class Society, Economy, Governance, Green Development, and Regional Development.

While education is arguably a central component of all priority areas, it is particularly present in the priority areas on Human Development and Quality of Life and Middle-Class Society. The 2050 Vision seeks to respond to the changes, both demographic and cultural, in Mongolian society to adopt sustainability and resilience. For example, in the vision for general education, rapid urbanization is acknowledged and a call for long-term policy is prioritized. The emphasis on quality within the education sector is a cross-cutting issue and one that is acknowledged as having hampered development in the past. Governance and management will be addressed in the 2050 Vision to allow the education sector to build stable roots in its human capacity and sector-specific institutions. The measures set out in the 2050 Vision support an ongoing shift in the sector towards student-centered education and teachers that have the full capacity to deliver under this new paradigm.

The focus on poverty alleviation in the 2050 Vision resonates strongly with the findings of the source reports synthesized herein: Equitable access, quality education, and good governance and management of the education sector can, and have, contributed to poverty alleviation in Mongolia. The 2050 Vision openly tackles the sector's challenges with an ambitious set of activities to bring about transformational change.

The state budget has been the primary means to translate economic recovery to social wellbeing through education and other social services. The commitment to strengthening this association with a focus on reaching target vulnerable groups and a roadmap towards achieving sustainable growth in Mongolia is encouraging, especially for the education sector that has already been a catalyst for progress over the past 25 years.

iii. Education sector background

Education System Coverage and Growth Projections show a projected increase of 31.8% - 46.2% at the primary and secondary education levels by 2025.⁶ Mongolia’s total population is growing at 1.9% annually and the population is mostly comprised of young people, with nearly two thirds of the population under the age of 35.⁷ Population growth is expected to remain the same level for the medium-term however the country is experiencing urbanization as young people move to urban centers seeking employment opportunities. If the current population growth rate is maintained, the education system will need to expand in order to meet demand. The key questions facing the sector is how to respond to these demographic shifts, and what resources will be required to meet them satisfactorily and allow children to thrive.

FIGURE 1. Growth projection 2018 - 2030, ADB. Education Data Analysis Report, June 2019.

	Level		2018	2019	2020	2025	2030
1	Pre-primary		318,422	312,447	308,213	324655	313,729
			Growth %	-2%	-3%	2%	-1%
2	Primary and secondary	Primary	341,257	358,321	371,142	389702	403,922
			Growth %	5%	9%	14%	18%
		Secondary	321,538	338,884	363,849	502163	550,554
			Growth %	5%	13%	56%	71%
3	HE		190,539	189,219	185,184	189079	277,345
			Growth %	-1%	-3%	-1%	46%
4	Vocational and technical education		38,526	38,257	38,497	45,438	54,527
			Growth %	-1%	0%	18%	42%

The expected years of schooling (12 years) mirrors comparative countries. Since 2008, educational stages include pre-school (non-compulsory ages 2-5), primary school (age 6-10), lower secondary (age 11-14), and upper secondary (age 15-17). Children may exit this path after lower secondary to pursue vocational education.

⁶ Education Data Analysis Report, June 2019. ADB.
⁷ National Statistics Office of Mongolia



- 1.1 Early Childhood Education
- 1.2 General Education
- 1.3 Technical and Vocational Education and Training
- 1.4 Higher Education
- 1.5 Life-long Learning

1. ACCESS

This chapter outlines the current situation, achievements and persistent challenges in Mongolia in the provision of i. Early Childhood Education, ii. General Education, iii. Technical and Vocational Education and Training, and Higher Education.

VISION 2050 ACTIVITY RELEVANCE

- 1.5.2. Provide integral and coherent health, cultural, arts and education services corresponding to the age and level of maturity in maintaining life-long development of the citizens of Mongolia beginning from conception.
- 2.1.11. Provide necessary support and equitable access to education for those who are out of the education system, out of school, and lagging learners.
- 2.1.12. Improve the infrastructure required for educational institutions at all levels, create an equitable and accessible educational environment that meets the standards and quality requirements.
- 2.1.16. Provide opportunities and conditions for equal access to preschool education to children of herder, migrant, low-income families and children with disabilities and special needs and promote the participatory child development through improving the education of their parents.
- 2.1.19. Create an enabling environment for educational institutions as per required standards by improving the school dormitory, green development facilities, sports and art halls, canteen, and information technology classrooms following the specific rules, provide an accessible learning environment for those students with disabilities, and make the child and user-friendly, safe water, toilet, hygiene facilities available in schools.
- 2.1.43. Establish an open education system, develop an integrated online and distance learning platform, and introduce online training at the educational institutions of all levels. Develop and deliver online learning programs and contents (Massive open online courses and Open educational resources) for the learners and citizens of all ages, and recognize and support the non-formal education system.
- 9.1.1. To ensure accessibility of pre-school education to young children, increase the number of kindergarten facilities and child beds gradually following the demand and supply, keep the class size at required standards,
- 9.1.2. Ensure realization of learning standards in kindergartens and schools.

This chapter addresses access challenges however the chapter does not exhaustively address issues around ensuring education services that are compatible with nomadic lifestyles, mechanisms for vulnerable groups (gender, ethnic minorities, socio-economic factors) or rural-urban disparities as these are further developed in Chapter 2. Equity. For tertiary education (higher education and TVET), access is considered where students can study their chosen field based on admission grades, availability of institutions and dormitories, and considering enrollment trends.

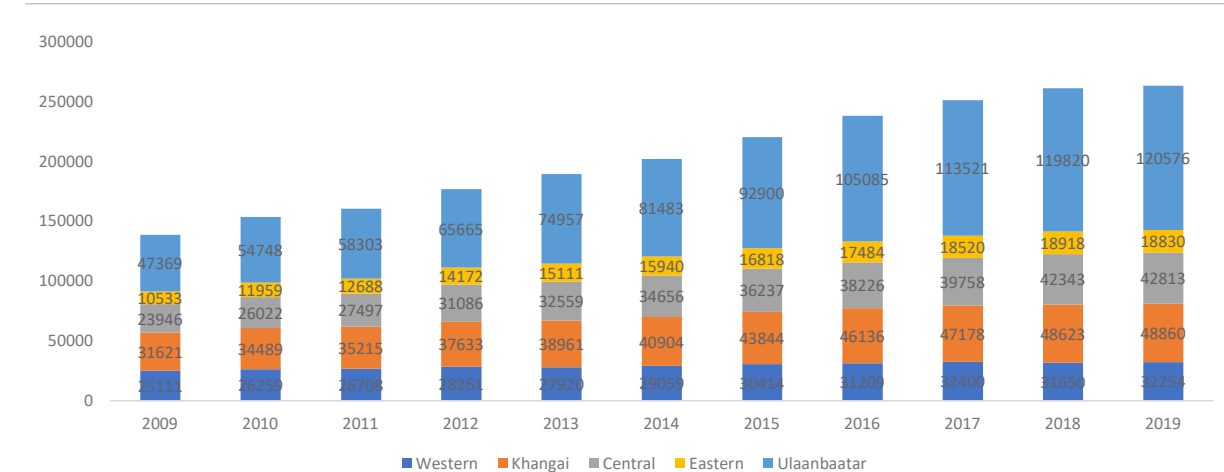
1.1 Early Childhood Education

The Law on Pre-school Education in Mongolia (2008) states the objective of pre-school education is to initiate the education journey and establish a strong basis from which children can start lifelong learning adapted to their age, skill set and creativity. The training and care provided in Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a crucial step in supporting children enter and complete the full education path.

Mongolia's ECE sector experienced a dramatic model shift in the early 1990s. In 1992, just two years after the country transitioned to a free market economy, investment in education dropped by 56%, and pre-school enrollment decreased by a dramatic 37%.⁸ The government's first phase wave of response came through a series initiatives such as the Pre-School Education National Programs 1 & 2 (1995-2000, 2001-2007 respectively), and the Strategic Plan for Education Sector Development (2000-2005), which placed strong emphasis on access to pre-school education for poor families and children of herder communities. The Law on Education (2002), the Law on Pre-school Education (2008), and Master Plan on Education Development for 2006-2015⁹ also set out targets and goals to increase access.

Around 91% of the under-5 population is enrolled in fixed kindergartens. Figures by the Mongolian Institute for Education Research (MIER) indicate that the pre-school net enrollment rate in the school year 2017/18 increased by 1.7 points in comparison to the previous year. There have been numerous policy and development plans approved in Mongolia aiming to achieve 100% enrollment for all 5-year-olds for the one-year minimum pre-school education set out in the Law on Preschool Education.¹⁰ The 100% enrollment target is reinforced in the 2050 Vision most notably under activity 2.2.14. Of the 256,720 enrollees between the ages of 2-5, the overwhelming majority, around 91%, are attending fixed kindergartens, with the remainder in alternative programs.¹¹ Of the 1,435 kindergartens, 672 are in the capital city, 344 in aimag centers, 385 in soum (village) centers and 34 in bagh (hamlets). The role of the private sector in pre-school services has grown over the past decade, up from 4.6% to 17.6% of enrollments. The largest private kindergarten provider is Mongolian Railway, which operates 27 kindergartens across the country.

FIGURE 2. Kindergarten enrollment by region, Mongolia. Source NSO

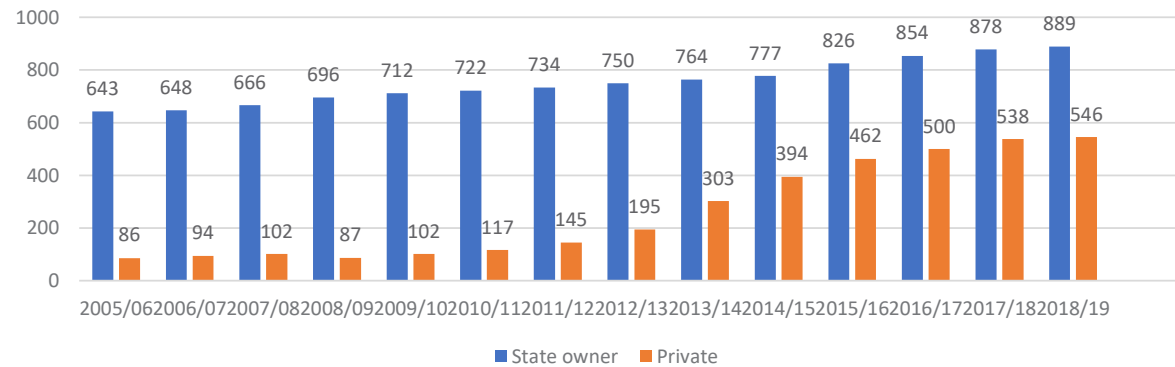


⁸ Education in Mongolia: A Country Report. Ulaanbaatar, 2019. Page 82

⁹ Master Plan on Education Development for 2006-2015.

¹⁰ Education Sector Medium-term Development Plan 2021-2030; Comprehensive National Development Policy 2006.

¹¹ Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis 2019.

FIGURE 3. Number of pre-school institutions covered in the statistical reporting. Source: NSO.

In Mongolia, the state provides financing for all children to attend pre-schooling before entering general education. The Law on Pre-school Education (2008)¹² sets out a framework for the provision of support to ECE services through both public and private kindergartens and providers offering regular and alternative programs. Funding is allocated to institutions through a per-student calculation for variable costs as well as government disbursements for capital investment (discussed at length in Chapter 4. Education Cost and Finance). While contribution covers educational services, other related costs such as transportation, and stationary supplies are generally covered by parents. Additional services such as supplementary teaching hours, summer services and excursions are also covered by the state.

The government has taken proactive steps to increase pre-school enrollment among herder communities. Reports estimate that anywhere between 25% and 40% of the Mongolian population is nomadic, with most exerting herder activities such as cattle husbandry. Children from these families have been particularly challenging to enroll and retain owing to seasonal migration. Children of miners and construction workers face similar challenges as they may have no year-long abode. Since 2005, the government and international development actors have invested heavily in establishing mobile kindergartens to provide services to these communities. Projects have been financed and/or implemented by international organizations such as Save the Children, UNICEF, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and JICA, among others.¹³ These provisions are reinforced in the 2050 Vision under activity 2.1.14.

TYPES OF ALTERNATIVE STRUCTURE PROVIDING ECE SERVICES

Mobile (or *ger*) kindergartens: these are often temporary traditional housing structures operating at the *soum* or *baghs* level. Most mobile kindergartens are affiliated with a fixed kindergarten. Herders' children attend during the summer.

Shift classes: training sessions typically organized over a half day at *soum* and *aimag* centers for children who do not attend regular kindergarten.

Travelling teachers: an individual responsible for reaching a family or community and giving lessons to children.

Short-term training: these sessions are typically organized in *soum* or *aimag* centers the spring before enrollment in school.

Persistent access challenges in ECE access

Between 2005 and 2017, more children were enrolled in terms of overall numbers, but the gross enrolment remained stagnant at around 80% since 2014. Despite a focus on accessibility in the Master Plan to Develop Education of Mongolia 2006-2015, and in the Law on Preschool (2008), reaching vulnerable and excluded groups remains a challenge. The children of herders, disabled children, and the urban poor remain the hardest to reach groups (discussed further in Chapter 2. Equity).

Geospatial factors are considerable obstacles for families seeking to access ECE services despite the introduction of alternative programs.

- **Currently 45.2% of herders' children are not enrolled in ECE.** Of those enrolled, 11.5% of all enrollees in fixed kindergartens are herders' children but they represent 24-40% of the population. Many live between 10 and 55 kilometers from soum centers. Alternative services have provided a pathway to access ECE and herder children represent 69% of all those enrolled in alternative programs.¹⁴ The enrollment of herders' children reached 44% in 2015 but fell by around 9% in 2018.¹⁵
- **10% of children in urban or semi-urban areas are unenrolled in pre-school programs.** This is largely thought to be the results of a lack of services and/or an inability to pay associated costs such as transport, additional material and activities associated with kindergarten.

There is a need to build more kindergartens despite heavy investment over the past eight years.

Between 2010 and 2018, a total of 267 projects and activities were initiated (worth 197.8 billion MNT) to build pre-school infrastructure but demand is outpacing supply.¹⁶ The 2050 Vision addresses this challenge through activity 9.1.1 calling for more kindergarten facilities. Nonetheless, supply has not kept up with demand, and a lottery system has been put in place to allocate two-year places. The private market in Ulaanbaatar has seen the fastest growth in Mongolia and, as of 2018-2019, there were more private (441) than public kindergartens (241). Concerns are raised in several reports about the distribution of these investments regionally with some reports highlighting a lack of investment in regions such as Bayan Ulgee, where 90% of the country's Khalkh live.¹⁷ Such regional inequalities may be addressed in the 2050 Vision under the Regional Development priority although it is not explicitly mentioned.

Current overcrowding in urban areas will be exacerbated in the context of increasing urbanization, particularly in Ulaanbaatar. Intensified pressure from population growth and growing social needs of parents will require the number of kindergartens to be increased (see graph below). The situation is most critical in the capital city, Ulaanbaatar where the population continues to grow at around 6% annually. The city currently falls below national averages and inadequate infrastructure raises health, safety and hygiene concerns. Based on growth projections and the 2050 Vision activities on access may fall short.

¹⁴ Preschool Education Sector Study Report. Page 20.

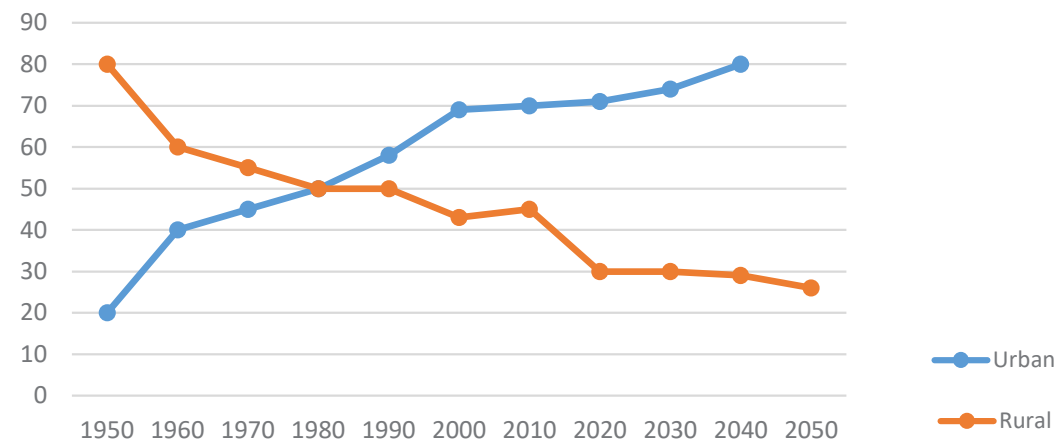
¹⁵ Pre-primary Education Sub-sector Study Report.

¹⁶ Education Finance and Investment Report. Page 22.

¹⁷ Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis 2019.

¹² State Great Hural Order №13, SGH, 2008.

¹³ Preschool Education Sector Study Report. Page 52.

FIGURE 4. Urban-Rural population forecast, Mongolia. Source NSO.

Despite important steps to increase enrollment in ECE on a massive scale, a lack of awareness may be limiting demand among some communities. Language barriers may prevent some ethnic minority groups from interpreting messages and the dominance of the Mongolian language in kindergarten teaching may dissuade some parents (discussed further in Chapter 2. Equity).¹⁸ The 2050 vision activity 2.1.15. makes explicit reference to increasing mobile kindergarten services.

There are concerns over corruption in the lottery system in place to allocate kindergarten spaces in Ulaanbaatar. Some reports raise questions about the transparency of the allocation by lottery system with suggestions of bribes, connections or positions being used to secure enrollment.

1.2 General Education

Over the past decade, basic education access strategies have been successful and enrollment is nearly universal at 98.5%.¹⁹ General education is considered the most important stage in the educational system and Mongolia's plans, policies and laws over the past five years have demonstrated a strong focus on access, in particular through the Comprehensive National Development Policy 2007-2012 and Education Sector Medium-term Development Plan 2021-2030.

The biggest achievement in the sub-sector in this decade has been the conversion to a 12-year education system aligned with international benchmarks. Since 1975, the general education system has been reformed five times and as of 2014, it covers 12 years of instruction. The current focus as demonstrated in the 2050 Vision is to maintain high levels of access by ensuring adequate facilities, activity 2.1.18, and the quality of facilities 2.1.19.

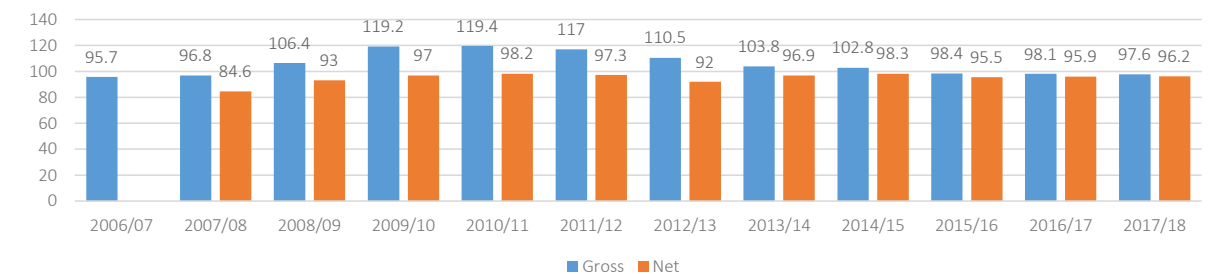
Mongolia's general education is largely free, and mostly dominated by public institutions however, there is a growing and active private sector. Of the 803 schools across the country, 82% are public and 18% are private. Among the total number of schools, 558 are in rural or semi-urban areas, and 245 are in Ulaanbaatar. Most private schools are located in Ulaanbaatar and the private school market is growing fastest in the capital city.²⁰

¹⁸ Pre-primary Education Section Analysis, 2019. Page 65.

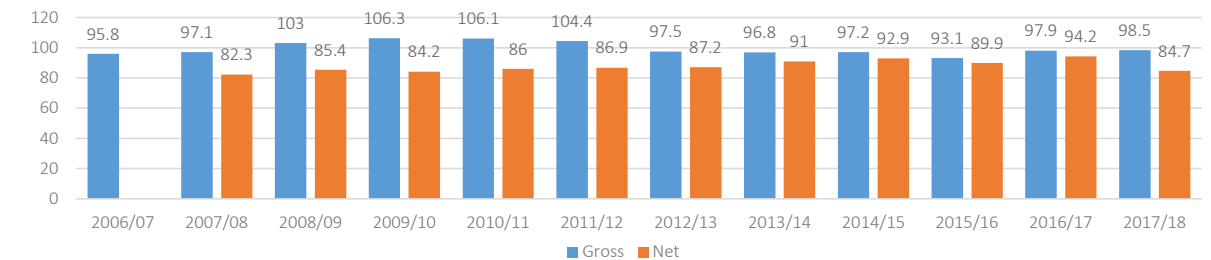
¹⁹ Standard Classification of Education, ISCED-2011, UNESCO-UIS.

²⁰ Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sport (2019). 2018-2019 academic year statistics.

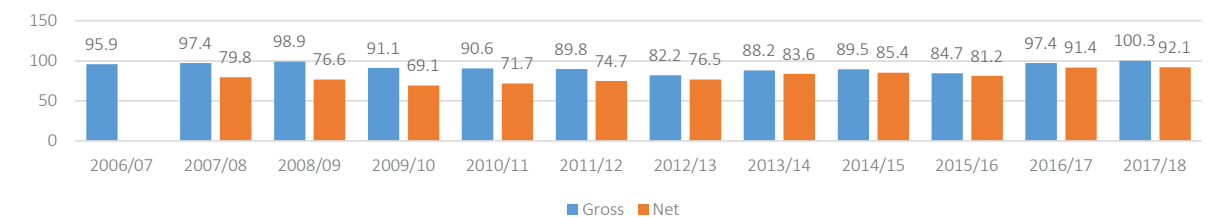
Overall enrollment in primary schools is high. Net enrollment rates in 2015 were 96.3% and continuation to grade 5 was 94% according to figures by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science, and Sport. A large difference between gross and net enrolment ratio in 2008-2013 is due to the transition from the 11-year to the 12-year schooling system.

FIGURE 5. Gross and net enrollment rate of primary education. Source: NSO

For lower secondary education, enrollment continues to increase. As observed in primary education, a large difference between gross and net enrollment ratio in 2008-2013 is due to the transition from the 11-year schooling to the 12-year schooling system.

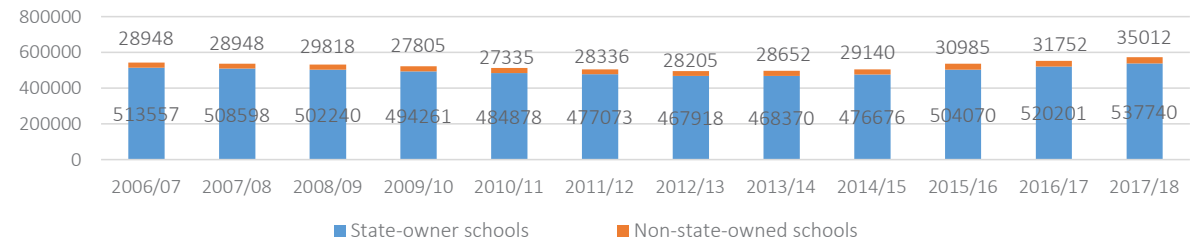
FIGURE 6. Gross and net enrollment rate of lower secondary education. Source: NSO

Upper secondary education has increased. The increase in enrollment in upper secondary education could be attributed to two factors: increased availability of schools in rural areas and/or increased willingness of parents to enroll their children in upper secondary education.

FIGURE 7. Gross and net enrollment rate of upper secondary education. Source: NSO

Enrollment in private schools has increased minimally, not yet reaching the 10% target set by the government. The percentage of children in non-state schools has increased by 1% over 12 years, reaching 5.8% in 2015 and falling short of the 10% target set out in the Education Sector Development Plan 2006-2015.

FIGURE 8. Enrollment in state-owned and private schools. Source: NSO



The state's policy to build and manage dormitories for herders' children to attend primary and secondary school is largely effective. The dormitories allow children of herders who live far from educational institutions to sleep in dorms and attend classes. Between 2008-2007, the government built 79 new dormitories and met its target to increase the dormitory enrollment of herders' children by 40.5% to reach 75%.²¹ Since 2000, the state covers all associated costs in dormitory accommodation. There is nevertheless a need to invest more heavily in dormitories to increase capacity and bring them up to hygiene standards as 71.3% do not have water pipes, 61% have outside toilets.²² Activity 2.1.19. in the 2050 Vision makes explicit reference to improving the conditions of school dormitories and creating resource centers.

Persistent access challenges to general education

Children who are out of school. According to MECS,²³ there were 682 children out of school aged 6-14 years of age in the academic year of 2017-2018. The total number is highest at the age 6 and decreases until the age 8. According to data, the reasons for being out of school were health reasons (32.6%), poverty (23.6%), not interested in learning (5.1%), and child labor (1.3%). The remaining category 'no reasons' (37.4%) is increasing year by year according to reports because many of the reasons are interlinked and so are counted as 'no reason'. Based on data gathered, most of the children out of school (75% or 514) have never enrolled and most are 6-11 years old (68% or 462).²⁴ The 2050 Vision target 2.1.11 specifies that those out of education will be a target group for support.

Population growth predictions mean that there will be a severe shortage of schools in the coming years, most notably secondary schools from 2024. The key issue faced in access to primary and secondary education is the projected growth of primary and secondary school students by 2030. The number of students to be enrolled at lower and upper secondary students will increase by 56% in 2024, and 71% in 2030, compared to 2018 levels.²⁵ This demographic shift will exacerbate existing lack of classrooms. In particular within the capital city which is already characterized by oversized classes and high coefficients (discussed at length in Chapter 4. Efficiency and Quality). Furthermore, many schools are already in a state of disrepair and/or do not meet hygiene and/or safety standards. Activity 2.1.12 of the 2050 Vision commits to improve infrastructure availability based on population shifts.

²¹ Education Sector Development Plan 2006-2015.

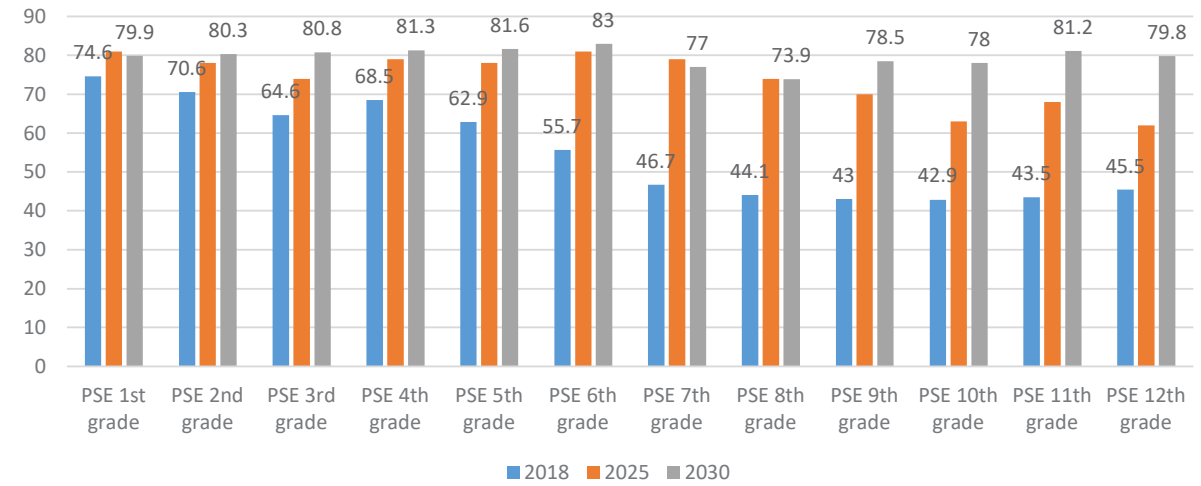
²² In addition, 90% or 34.7 thousand children who requested live in 522 dormitories of general education schools this year. 71.3% of the dormitories use decentralized water supply or carried water from well, and 61% use outdoor sanitary latrines, and of which 42% are located far from 70 m (MECSS, 2019), these should be considered when making investment decisions. Education, Finance and Investment. Page 33.

²³ National Statistics Office of Mongolia.

²⁴ Gender Analysis in Education Sector of Mongolia: Focus on Boys Education. Page 35.

²⁵ Education Sector Mid-Term Development Plan 2021-2030.

FIGURE 9. Forecast population growth up to 2030 by school age (by class and thousand people) Source: NSO.



In urban areas, distances between home and school can be a barrier for children, especially for migrant families. While the distance between home and school for children living in urban areas is shorter than for rural children, it can be equally as challenging. In Ulaanbaatar, migrant families tend to move to the outskirts of the city and face a daily commute of 7 km to access primary and secondary schools.²⁶ In 2019, 152 school buses were provided to service 55 schools (36 at 30 public schools, and 116 at 25 private schools). Parents are charged a fee for the bus and some reports have suggested this may be an obstacle (discussed further in Chapter 2. Equity)

1.3 Technical and Vocational Education and Training

The purpose of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is to provide skills and knowledge, upgrade qualifications and develop both work and communication abilities. The sub-sector seeks to empower learners to develop their talents and interests and engage in the labor and business world.²⁷

The sub-sector has been reformed several times and is governed by the Law on Vocational Education and Training (2002). TVET institutions are classified as either vocational education, technical education or technical training institutions. Around 77% of the total TVET students are in vocational education programs, 18% are in technical education, and the remaining 5% in professional training to get competency certificates.²⁸ As of 2018, there are 86 VET institutions in Mongolia including state-owned and non-state-owned polytechnic colleges, vocational education and training institutions. In addition to formal education, knowledge and skills are provided through non-formal short-term training, which supports citizens to learn throughout their lives. It is estimated that there are 560 short-term training providers offering skill development and training through non-formal education although they are not accredited (see Chapter 3. Efficiency and Quality).²⁹

²⁶ Swiss Development Agency.

²⁷ Mongolia Law on Vocational Education and Training, 2002. Page 50.

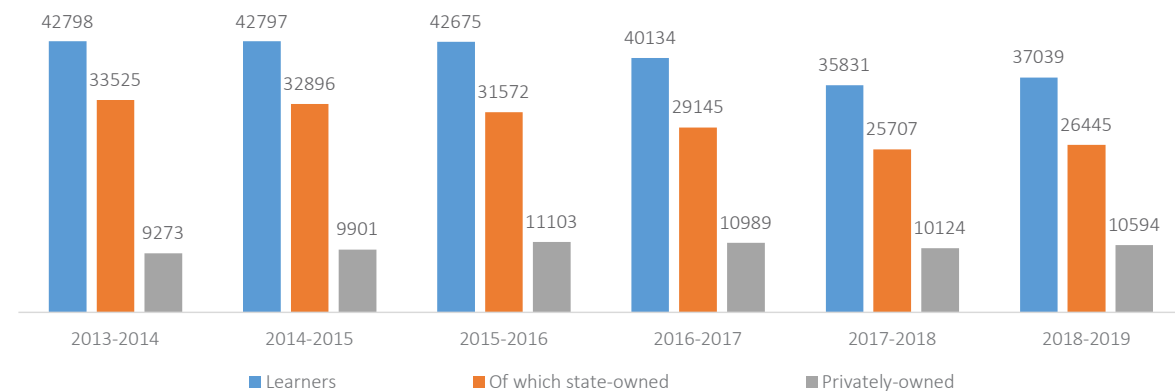
²⁸ Mongolia Law on Vocational Education and Training, 2002. Page 50.

²⁹ Data from the VETPID, 2019

Since 2000, TVET in Mongolia has contributed to the country's economic growth by training thousands of the population to be active in the newly formed market-based economy. The reforms between 2004 and 2010 allowed the sub-sector to adapt and offer curriculum-based teaching while capitalizing on the changing demands of the market. Sub-sector reforms aligned TVET in Mongolia with international standards and increased public awareness and, between 1998-2005, efforts were made to develop a sectoral plan and national program to make the sector more inclusive and flexible.³⁰

The sub-sector has grown since the 2000s, but the trend is not linear and reports call for a push for enrollments. The highest growth of enrollment was observed between 2013-2016 and reports suggest this can be attributed to a government stipend provided to TVET students 2012 onwards, the growth of private sector service providers and/or the high birth rate during 1994-1995. There was a sharp decrease in 2016-2017 which is largely thought to be attributable to the temporary removal of the student stipend in 2016. Occupations offered by TVET institutions vary every year depending on the labor market demand. Enrollment in professions that are not in demand tend to be low- meaning trends are difficult to track and enrollment cannot be compared in detail from year to year.

FIGURE 10. Number of TVET students by ownership type. VETPICD statistical data, 2019



For a country with the population density of Mongolia, access to TVET is reasonably distributed across all geographies although half of all TVET institutions are in the capital. In each aimag there are 1-2 institutions that provide vocational training in 10-20 occupations. While distances to aimag may be considerable, the population sparsity makes it difficult to foresee more institutions based on current enrollment numbers and is considered fair in most reports. Of the 68 state-run Vocational Training and Production Centers (VTPCs) and 18 Polytechnic Colleges, half operate in Ulaanbaatar. Trends indicate that enrollment numbers in rural areas have decreased whereas student numbers in Ulaanbaatar have increased.

Persistent access challenges to TVET

The sub-sector is not meeting previously established targets on access. The Education Sector Master Plan 2006-2015 sought to reeducate 40% of dropout students from general education through alternative or equivalent learning programs in TVET or life-long learning; however, this goal was not achieved. The number of secondary school students choosing to progress to 10th grade is also increasing, meaning fewer are enrolling in TVET programs. Some reports suggest that, owing to the per-student funding of education institutions, schools may be encouraging children to remain in school. Demand for TVET is also highly dependent on market trends. In years of economic downturn or recession, the sub-sector suffers.

³⁰ In 1998, the Education Sector Development One project was approved, and the National Program on TVET was created to conduct a reform of TVET administration and management, improve techniques, tools, equipment, buildings, and make the training program more inclusive and flexible.

Research and studies on the sub-sector are lacking and it causes difficulties in monitoring the trends.

This lack of data is a recurring challenge in the tertiary education sub-sectors and one that is addressed to a certain extent in the 2050 Vision, most notably 2.1.43. to develop an education management information system at all levels. The diversity of education institutions also makes data collection challenging however this is addressed further in Chapter 4. Efficiency and Quality.

1.4 Higher Education

The 2050 Vision does not set out specific targets on access to higher education beyond those that apply to all sub-sectors of the education sector. It calls for an, “equitable and accessible educational environment that meets the standards and quality requirements.”

Public universities are fewer in number than their private counterparts, but service 90% of students.

By 2018, there were 18 state-owned higher education institutions in total: 14 of which are classified as universities, four are higher education institutes. There are 73 non-state-owned universities in total: 21 are classified as universities, 45 are higher education institutes, and 7 are colleges (3 of which are technological colleges). Although 19% of all higher education institutions are state-owned, 56% of all higher education students study in public institutions.

Demand for higher education is rising, particularly for state-owned universities as they are considered more prestigious.

As the number of students in the countryside has been decreasing, the number of students in Ulaanbaatar continues to increase. In the academic year 2010-2011, 87% of all students enrolled were studying in Ulaanbaatar, in 2018 this percentage reached 93%. Measures have been taken to increase enrollment in areas outside the capital, most notably a reduction of the exam score requirement for entry from 480 to 420 for non-capital higher education institutions. The objective of this measure is to boost enrollment in non-capital higher education however concerns are raised in numerous reports about the impact this may have on quality and the and on the reputations of rural higher education institutions.³¹

The decline of scholarships and financial aid availability and the mechanism of directly providing the financial assistance to schools impacts affordability for students.

The relatively low cost of tuition in comparison to international standards, combined with the availability of scholarships (in the past) positively impacted accessibility and the cost of higher education. However, given that the availability of scholarships has rapidly declined by 60% from 2013 to 2017 there has been an impact to students. In particular students from rural areas are impacted by room and board costs. Statistics from the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport for 2018 state that of the 12,486 students who applied for dormitory rooms, 11,435 (91.6%) were successful. There is need to increase the financial services, talent-based scholarships, and other forms of financial assistance to ensure equitable accessibility to education.

The number of students studying abroad is increasing, especially those engaging in government exchange programs.

In 2018, 4,346 citizens applied to study abroad. 1,855 (42.7%) passed the exams and were invited to interviews, and 1,376 were accepted. From 2012-2018, a total of 8,088 students studied abroad through government programs and 7,181 were financed through loans from the Education Loan Fund. The loan agreement requires the students to return after graduating abroad and work for a minimum of 5 years.

³¹ Education in Mongolia: A Country Report. Ulaanbaatar, 2019. Page 86.

Persistent challenges in HE Access

There is strong centralization of higher education institutions and students in the capital. There are on average 30-40 thousand children graduating primary and secondary school per year in Mongolia, 40% are in Ulaanbaatar and 60% are outside of the capital yet 91% of graduates enroll at institutions in Ulaanbaatar, and just 9% in other areas. The State’s regional development concept calls for balanced regional development in areas such as universities.³² The 2050 Vision makes explicit reference to the urban-rural disparities that span all social services, including education. According to the framework, Ulaanbaatar is reaching its maximum capacity and the country must explore decentralization as a necessary step, including with respect to universities.

Students seeking to study non-priority subjects may find it difficult to access courses at state-owned higher education and those studying outside the capital have limited course options. State-owned institutions prioritize subjects that are aligned with market priorities, typically in areas such engineering and technology, natural science and agriculture. Many rural state-owned institutions are not offering the same range of courses meaning that, in some cases, the private sector market is beginning to fill this gap but with unaccredited institutions (see Chapter 3. Quality and Efficiency for more details).

Demographic waves that are currently moving through the education system owing to the change to a 12-year system and birth rates mean higher education institutions have to be flexible. The total number of students in 2006 was 142,411, in 2018 it is at 157,625 yet it has been as high as 178,295. Higher education institutions must be resilient in order to manage these shifts.

1.5 Life-long Learning

In Mongolia, the lifelong education sub-sector was established in the 1990s in response to strong socio-economic demands. The Law on Education set out policies to promote lifelong education as means to service the hardest to reach learners.³³ Life-long learning is providing education through alternative or equivalent programs for elementary, basic, and secondary education in 354 centers throughout Mongolia. The participants or target groups of lifelong learning are school drop-out children, adolescents and adults, monks, housewives, unemployed citizens, migrants, pre-school aged children and their parents, vulnerable groups, and citizens with disabilities and those who have little to no access to education. In 2018 7,296 students enrolled in lifetime education centers according to the National Center for Life-long Learning. The lifelong learning services are decentralized with aimag, city and district governors taking responsibility for the sub-sector.

Persistent access challenges in life-long learning

The persistent and key challenges in life-long learning relate to the lack of coordination, relevance of services in relation to Mongolia’s demographic needs, and distance. There is a lack of an efficient coordination mechanism and limited collaboration between governmental and non-governmental organizations, companies and individuals offering lifelong education services. Furthermore, the relevance of the programs needs to be expanded and improved upon in line with the changing population dynamics and respond to emerging needs and interests. Despite a reasonably balanced regional distribution of institutions, the vast territory of the country means that some learners are far from aimag or soum centers. Distance is therefore a challenge for some rural students seeking to access life-long learning services. Citizens in Ulaanbaatar have more courses available but may face access challenges due to overcrowding.

³² The regional development concept of Mongolia” states in it provision 4.7.4.a “establish an education and science structure which is developed in line with the regional development, support regions in building universities, college branches and centers for research, information and trainings.”
³³ Sub-Sector Study Report on Life-long Education 2019. Page 10



2.1	Learners with disabilities and special needs
2.2	Income related disparities
2.3	Rural learners
2.4	National minority groups
2.5	Gender
2.6	Achievements in equity

2. EQUITY

Disparities persist along some or many lines, and these disproportionately affect marginalized and vulnerable groups such as the poor, ethnic minorities, the disabled, and the elderly. In Mongolia, questions of equity are particularly pertinent when discussing education of children from herder families, ethnic minorities with different linguistic profiles, boys, the poor, and children with disabilities. Building on the issues discussed in Chapter 1. Access, this chapter shall focus on learners with disabilities, income-related disparities, rural learners, national minority learners, and gender-related equity issues.

VISION 2050. HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

- 2.1.11. Provide necessary support and equitable access to education for those who are out of the education system, out of school, and lagging learners.
- 2.1.18. Establish a legal framework that aimed to increase the quality and accessibility of child-care facilities for children aged 1-2 years and adopt and enforce the regulatory requirements and standards for child care service providers.
- 2.1.19. Create an enabling environment for educational institutions as per required standards by improving the school dormitory, green development facilities, sports and art halls, canteen, and information technology classrooms following the specific rules, provide an accessible learning environment for those students with disabilities, and make the child and user-friendly, safe water, toilet, hygiene facilities available in schools.
- 2.1.20. Improve the quality of education from the primary and secondary schools and the teaching contents and methods reflecting the Mongolian history, language, culture, national heritage, customs, patriotic views, personality formation and development, dual language, and universal values of humanity.
- 2.1.24. Improve the management of the school dormitory system and child protection at the dormitories, setting the regulations that up to 10 teaching hours of those teachers who worked in the pieces of training and other activities for dormitory students to include in teachers’ overall workload.

QUALITY OF LIFE AND MIDDLE CLASS

- 3.1.15 Facilitate targeted skills building and vocational training for household heads and adults of poor households, who are less educated and unemployed in a frame of implementation of policies on vocational skills development.
- 3.1.16 Enable support system targeting primary school age children of poor families by creating a fund of primary education textbooks, providing services for textbook leasing and rotational use of textbooks, offering discounts on school uniforms and ensuring that the state can bear a certain portion of living costs in dormitories and travel expenses.
- 3.1.17. Create equal opportunities for children of poor families to access kindergartens and general education schools, and scholarship programs of vocational education and diploma training to enable them to grow as an educated Mongolian free from poverty.

ULAANBAATAR AND SATELLITE CITY

- 9.1.1 To ensure accessibility of pre-school education to young children, increase the number of kindergarten facilities and child beds gradually following the demand and supply, keep the class size at required standards.
- 9.1.2 Ensure realization of learning standards in kindergartens and schools.

In addition to the issues related to access to opportunity, this chapter will dive deeper into the specific needs of specific groups and whether the current education structures in Mongolia is catering to those needs and allow learners the opportunity to flourish.

2.1 Learners with disabilities and special needs

As of 2018, 3.3% of the total population of Mongolia, or 105,730 citizens, are registered as people with disabilities and 33.7% are living in Ulaanbaatar.³⁴ Nationally there is limited disaggregated data on social-psychological development of children under 5 by age/sex.³⁵ There are no statistics available about how many children with disabilities have been enrolled to primary, lower and upper secondary grades.³⁶ The Health, Education and Social Protection Commission is the national body mandated to identify, screen and assess children with disabilities at aimag level however reports suggest this service is not functioning satisfactorily.³⁷ Reports also suggest cross-sectorial cooperation, strengthened support systems for early detection, diagnosis and evaluation of the special needs of children is required.³⁸ The challenges faced by children with disabilities are often compounded by prejudice and a lack of support.

Disabilities or special needs are not identified at key stages in educational development meaning that people with disabilities are unable to access the correct services. Reports suggest that insufficient teacher training, parent awareness campaigns and tools and measurements may be the causes. Reports also highlight that the situation is more severe among groups that are traditionally marginalized or excluded from society, such as ethnic minorities, because cultural awareness, language barriers and social norms may stagger communication.

Children with disabilities are often unable to attend regular pre-school, primary and secondary schools and the training and resources they require are not always available. Children with special needs require adapted learning resources and capacitated teachers to access an enabling environment. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sport approved an order that included instruction plans and curriculum for children with mental, hearing and vision disabilities however there is little data on its implementation or progress.³⁹

Children with disabilities are enrolled in few special schools that are concentrated in Ulaanbaatar. Figures from the MECSS for 2018 indicate that a total of 2,779 children with disabilities were enrolled in 2018 and among them 1,740 were enrolled in special schools.⁴⁰ There are currently six schools and kindergarten for children with special needs with the highest concentration in the capital city or other semi-urban hubs.

³⁴ Education Sector Medium-term Development Plan 2019. Page 18.

³⁵ Education Data Analysis Report. June 2019. Page 20.

³⁶ Primary Education Sector Analysis in Mongolia 2019. Page 70.

³⁷ Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis 2019, Page 58.

³⁸ Primary Education Sector Analysis in Mongolia 2019. Page 73

³⁹ Order No. A491, Minister of Education, Culture, Science, and Sports, August 6, 2018.

⁴⁰ Primary Education Sector Analysis in Mongolia 2019. Page 75

Children who are not in regular education or special schools attend life-long learning centers where resources and support vary from one center to another. There are 26 life-long learning centers and 326 units in aimag and districts where alternative or equivalent programs are taught. Dropout rates are also higher among children with special needs in life-long learning centers and reports indicate that resources and specialist support in these structures is limited.

Early Childhood Education

Procedures for the co-education of children with disabilities in general kindergartens are included in the Pre-school Education Law through the 2016 amendments, which make reference to the Law on Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities.⁴¹ Kindergartens providing alternative or equivalent services to children for early childhood learning are eligible for the same state funding as for fully able children. No targets or special provision are set out to cover additional needs such as teacher training, resources or equipment. There are only two special-purpose public kindergartens in the capital city and very few in rural areas.⁴² The 2050 Vision explicitly seeks to build on progress made in pre-school education in terms of access to address, “persistent challenges such as low attendance of herders’ children and those with disabilities”

At the early childhood education stage of the education system, the rate of enrolments of children with disabilities has remained stagnant for over a decade according to reports.⁴³ Nationwide, pre-school education enrollment of children with disabilities was 21.4% lower than average enrollment, meaning 70% of children with disabilities were enrolled (national enrollment for all children is 91%). Qualitative research suggests that social service providers may prioritize the medical treatment of disabled children over educational concerns. Furthermore, research suggests that at this early stage of development, parents may be more likely to keep disabled children at home, perhaps as a result of social pressures or for fear of a lack of acceptance among the kindergarten community.⁴⁴

Some reports suggest that parents of disabled children may be discouraged from applying for kindergartens places or that they are being refused as the education service provider claims not to have adequate space, trained staff and/or learning materials. Further study is required on this topic to establish to what extent this reflects the reality in kindergartens and what measures can be taken to increase accessibility.⁴⁵

General Education

Children with disabilities face numerous access challenges at all stages of the general education system and are unable to reach their full potential. According to figures from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sport, just under 78% of children with disabilities were accessing education service in 2018. Other reports suggest this figure may be closer to 66% when all children of secondary school age are considered. The same report suggests that nearly half of the all congenital disabled youths are illiterate or uneducated.⁴⁶ Recent measures have been taken by the Ministry, in 2018, Order No.A155 was approved to deliver individual training programs for children with disabilities. Within the 2050 Vision, numerous activities outline efforts to increase accessibility, most notably 2.1.19 which seeks to ‘provide an accessible learning environment for those students with disabilities.’

⁴¹ Preschool Education Sector Study Report 2019. Page 26.

⁴² Preschool Education Sector Study Report 2019. Page 26.

⁴³ Education Sector Medium-term Development Plan. Page 52.

⁴⁴ Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis 2019. Page 58.

⁴⁵ Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis 2019. Page 58.

⁴⁶ Education in Mongolia: A Country Report. Ulaanbaatar, 2019. Page 34

The number of disabled people without basic education is higher in rural areas. Figures estimate that the percentage of disabled people with basic education varies between aimag with some as low as 66% (Arkhangai) and others as high as 90% (Ulaanbaatar).⁴⁷ This suggests that children with disabilities face more obstacles accessing basic education in rural areas.

Teachers require additional support and training in order to confidently teach children with disabilities. Based on a survey among primary teachers, the main challenges faced are a lack of knowledge on recognizing and detecting different needs (74% agree, 8.2% fully agree). Teachers identified the following needs related to their knowledge, skills and teaching methodology: lack of specialized methodology; lack of knowledge and skills to diagnose, detect, support their development; lack of defined tasks and assessment methodologies.⁴⁸

Technical and Vocational Education and Training

Access to TVET for persons with disabilities remains a challenge. As of 2018, learners with disabilities represented only 5% of all TVET students. As stated in the Law on TVET 2009, every Mongolian citizen has the right to take on TVET in accordance with their previously acquired education, skill level or area of interest. The immediate challenge, as outlined above, is that some people with disabilities miss out on the opportunity to complete basic education. Developing an interest in an area is challenging for groups that are excluded from many aspects of society.

There is one institution dedicated to learners with special needs and disabilities—Recreation, Vocation and Training Center (RVTC). In addition to the vocational offered to people with disabilities, RVTC also offers nation-wide courses on sign language and approaches to working with people with disabilities. These courses are offered to professionals, parents and caretakers. Additional training is also available on labor readiness and how to support employment of disabled people.⁴⁹

Higher Education

The National Council for Education Accreditation (NCEA) created an accreditation system on service accessibility and quality in higher education.⁵⁰ The focus of this accreditation has been towards learners with disabilities and includes curriculum accreditation and preliminary accreditations (detailed in Chapter 3. Efficiency and Quality). Higher education institutions must now comply with the requirements for self-evaluation, external assessment and quality assurance processes that are inclusive and consider access for disabled students. Nevertheless, it should be noted that information on the measures taken in higher education institutions is scarce and, at this stage, has not been the object of any critical study to date.

The Education Loan Fund provides special grants for learners with disabilities or to those who have parents with disabilities that prevent them from working. As reported in the following section, there is a downward trend in the number of students receiving such grants.

Life-long Learning

The number of learners with disabilities studying equivalency subjects in life-long centers decreases as the grades advance. There have been few changes in the sub-sector with regards to disabled learners, however in 2018, the Government Decree №46 on the rights of children with disabilities called for life-long centers to deliver training for children with disabilities as equivalent to primary and secondary

⁴⁹ Education in Mongolia: A Country Report. Ulaanbaatar, 2019. Page 143.

⁵⁰ Education in Mongolia: A Country Report. Ulaanbaatar, 2019. Page 170.

education. According to reports by the National Center for Life-long Learning for 2018, of the 7,296 students who attended training at the 354 life-long learning centers, around 13% were persons with disabilities. Approximately 42.1% (393) of students with disabilities were enrolled in primary education, 47.2% (440) in secondary, and 10.7 % (100) in upper secondary education level classes through life-long learning services.⁵¹

2.2 Income related disparities

In the source reports used to compile this synthesis report, belonging to a poor or low-income group means living below the poverty line as defined by the government of Mongolia. In 2016, 29.6% of the population were living under the poverty line, 35% of the rural population and 27% of the population of Ulaanbaatar.⁵² Today it is likely that there are more people living in poverty in urban areas than in rural areas. Reports suggest that with rapid population shift to cities, poverty is also urbanizing, particularly in Ulaanbaatar. One in every three households in the outskirts of Ulaanbaatar is a migrant household, and 40% of all migrant families are vulnerable households with lower income.⁵³

VISION 2050. QUALITY OF LIFE AND MIDDLE CLASS

There is a risk that income inequality tends to become entrenched, limiting opportunities. As income inequality rises, costly private schools and hospitals are emerging. On the other hand, there is an observation that children in low-income households tend to remain out of the schools, with no medical services and vaccinations, and suffer from malnutrition. In the absence of a rational mechanism of redistribution of income and poor quality of and limited access to social services, such as schools and medical facilities, children in poor households have been exposed to poor physical and intellectual development. Thus, they will not be able to compete in the labor market. Inequality of opportunities may drive to social segregation and rejection of high-income groups, and even causes conflicts.

Early Childhood Education and General Education

Although there is no fee to enroll in public kindergarten, associated costs and a lack of awareness mean that only 34% of pre-school age children from the poorest families enroll.⁵⁴ One of the major policy achievements of the Law on Pre-school Education (2008) was to allocate state budget to cover costs for kindergarten and remove the burden from parents, thereby allowing children from low income or poor families to attend. Alternative training programs were also eligible for this support.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, costs associated with seasonal clothing, travel, additional financial contributions and extra activity costs are covered by parents and could be a burden for low-income families.⁵⁶ According to the Household Socioeconomic Survey results, households spent an annual average of 3,790,000 MNT; 9,100,000 MNT; and 10,450,000 MNT in 2012, 2014 and 2016 on ECE services indicating that costs are increasing. The 2050 Vision seeks to establish a legal framework to increase facilities for children aged 1-2 years yet there is no specific mention of measures for low-income families.

⁵¹ Sub-Sector Study Report on Life-long Education 2019. Page 47.

⁵² Key Factors Affecting Mongolia's Poverty Trends, World Bank. 2017

⁵³ Pre-School Education Sector Analysis 2019. Page 25.

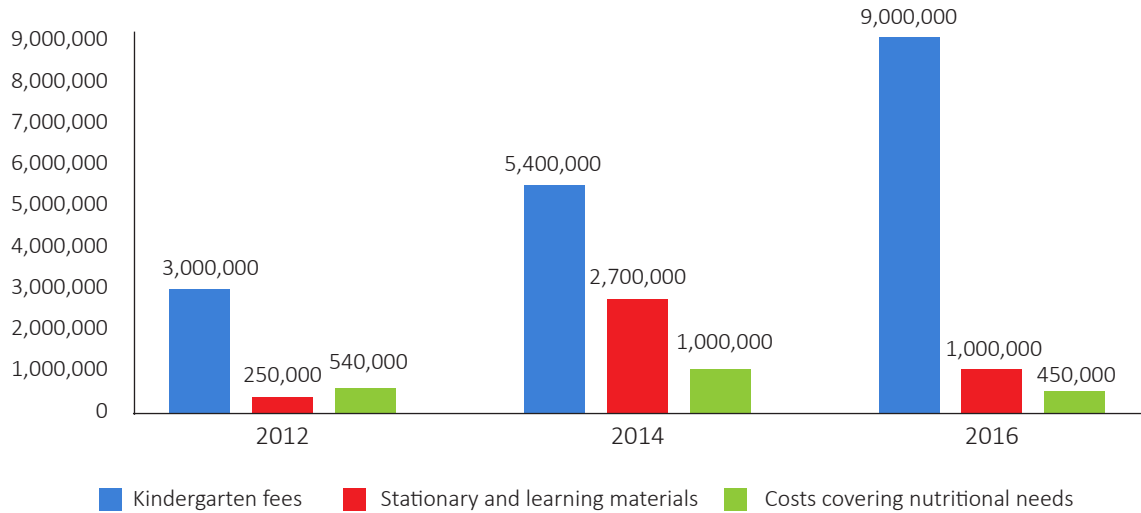
⁵⁴ Education Sector Medium-term Development Plan 2021-2030. Page 52.

⁵⁵ Preschool Education Sector Study Report. June 2019. Page 8.

⁵⁶ Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis 2019. Page 57

The growing number of private kindergartens, especially in the capital city, receive government subsidies without any conditions on access or equity. Private kindergartens have been mushrooming during the past decade, increasing by 86 in 2005 to 538 in 2017. Around 17% of all enrollees are attending private kindergartens and 80% of all private kindergartens are located in Ulaanbaatar where population and wealth are concentrated. At the national level, there is a risk that early childhood education will become polarized with exclusive private kindergartens in the capital with larger budgets and smaller class sizes, and public kindergarten in rural areas with larger classes and limited resources. There are calls for the state to review the pay-per-child approach to supporting early childhood education, especially with regards to subsidies for private kindergartens and without any conditions on equity and access for vulnerable groups.⁵⁷ As of 2018, non-state kindergartens in Ulaanbaatar charge 50,000–350,000 MNT as a monthly payment from parents and guardians. The amount of this service charge varies depending on the location and income level of households or parents.⁵⁸

FIGURE 11. Annual household expenditure on ECE. Source: Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis 2019.



The lottery system in place to allocate kindergarten spaces in Ulaanbaatar may also exclude those who do not have access to IT equipment and/or are not IT-literate. There are also concerns over how these places are allocated with suggestions of patronage/bribery (see Chapter 1. Access)

In primary and secondary schools, assessments by wealth quintiles reflect that children from the poorest households are at risk of being left out of school. The average scores for private schools are much higher compared to the state schools in general. Possible explanations include class sizes and access to better resources (see Chapter 3. Efficiency and Quality for more details). The share of private schools in the overall market has increased from 5.3% in 2009 to 6.1% in 2018⁵⁹ and there is little evidence to suggest that scholarships are being offered to low-income families to access private schools.

⁵⁷ Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis 2019. Page 68

⁵⁸ Preschool Education Sector Study Report. June 2019. Page 19.

⁵⁹ Primary and Secondary Sub-sector Report. Page 20.

Vision 2050 sets out a number of measures to support children of poor households in their education. Activity 3.1.16, will provide support for children of poor families in accessing general education by funding textbooks, creating a discount program for school uniforms and bearing a certain portion of living costs. Activity 3.1.17 will further support access for low-income families to kindergarten and general education schools through scholarship programs.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training, and Higher Education

The state supports learners in TVET through a stipend or monthly allowance and most do not pay tuition fees. Around 74% of TVET students do not pay tuition fee, 5% study with funding from an employer, and the remaining 20% pay.⁶⁰ This stipend offered to TVET students was temporarily discontinued in 2016 leading to a sharp drop in the number of students. It is clear such measures are likely to affect those students coming from families with low incomes. The Law on TVET Education also puts forth provisions for students doing internships to be paid a decent salary corresponding to the work they are doing. Such measures are lifelines for students who cannot rely on parental or guardian support to study.

Under the 2050 Vision, the government of Mongolia proposes to facilitate vocational training for household heads and adults of poor households in order to help them lift themselves out of poverty. This activity, 3.1.15, falls under the overall goal of promoting stable growth of the population.

Financial barriers are the main access challenge for students in higher education, especially those moving from rural areas to the capital who have to pay additional accommodation costs. As of the 2018-2019 academic year, the average annual tuition fee of undergraduate training (bachelor) is 2,149.8 thousand MNT for state-owned HEI and 2,316.8 thousand MNT for private HEIs. In the higher education academic year 2017-2018, 71.4% of all students paid the tuition themselves, while 24.6% had some type of state support. The largest group of students that receive state support are the children of civil servants (43%).⁶¹ The relatively low tuition fees in comparison to international averages and the accessibility of scholarships may however reduce the financial burden.⁶²

There are fewer resources being allocated to support students from poor families access higher education. The State fund for Study was established in 1993 to support students who met the admission requirements but were unable to cover tuition fees. Today, the main source of funding comes from the Education Loan Fund that provides discounted loans and grants. Special grants are awarded to learners who are orphans, disabled or have disabled parents, or come from large households (more than three students). There is nevertheless a downward trend in the number of students receiving grants.

FIGURE 12. Students who received loans or other financial support. Source: Higher Education Sub-sector

Year	Discounted loan	Grant (no return payment)	Competition rewards	Learners from households below the poverty line	Learner from herder households	3 Students from 1 household	Total
2006	8460	2377	139	12156	4808	941	28881
2007	7782	2418	138	11523	4167	897	26925
2008	7048	2424	113	11117	3021	565	24288
2009	7319	2361	173	11242	2757	380	24232

⁶⁰ Study report of Technical, Vocational, Educational and Training Sector 2019. Page 40

⁶¹ Higher Education Sub-sector. Page 81

⁶² Higher Education Sub-sector. Page 12

2010	7280	2612	200	11606	2613	236	24547
2011	6013	2416	230	10876	2212	67	21814
2012	3381	3462	0	0	0	0	6843
2013	5849	8840	0	0	0	0	14689
2014	4421	5088	0	0	0	0	9509
2015	1985	5273	0	0	0	0	7258
2016	1830	5415	0	0	0	0	7245
2017	0	5830	0	0	0	0	5830
Total	61368	48516	993	68520	19578	3086	202061

A bursary that equals to 30% of the tuition fee to cover living expenses during teaching practice was introduced in 2018 for higher education students studying teaching and doing teaching practice in rural schools. As of 2019, 380 students had received these funds offered by the Mongolian National University of Education to students carrying out teaching practice in rural schools.⁶³

Additional scholarships are available for students from low income households, but these are extremely competitive. Only 10% of individuals between 18-24 enrolled in higher university come from households in the poorest quintile, compared to an astounding 88% that came the richest quintile.⁶⁴ Businesses, development organizations, NGOs, and citizens offer scholarships according to the criteria set by the scholarship provider. Some scholarship providers include the President of Mongolia, Prime Minister of Mongolia scholarships as well as Khan bank, Golomt bank, Zorig foundation, Oyu-Tolgoi, Student Union of Mongolia, and Swiss Development Agency scholarships.

2.3 Rural learners

In the context of this report, rural is understood as those learners living in soum, bagh, or other remote geographies. Non-rural is understood at aimag (semi-urban) or capital city. A considerable proportion of Mongolian population is nomadic (25%-40% according to different sources). A large percentage also work in professions that require them to migrate or transit regularly to follow work, construction or mining for example. While this section addresses the challenges in access among rural populations more generally, many of the challenges are felt most by herder families. It is however useful to broaden the scope of this section to shed greater light on the evolving rural-urban dichotomy in Mongolia.

Urban-rural disparities feature in the Vision 2050 as a key cross-sectoral issue to be addressed as it affects all social services, including education. Ulaanbaatar is reaching its maximum capacity and the Vision opens new dialogues around the decentralization of key administrative and educational functions.

The difference between urban and rural population in terms of education level is more pronounced at higher levels. According to 2010 Population and Housing Census data, the percentage of illiterate and uneducated population in rural areas is 2.7 times higher than urban areas.⁶⁵ On the contrary, the percentage of people with higher education living in urban areas is 3.3 times higher than in rural areas. In early childhood education, children of herder families are the main group excluded from services. This issue is discussed at length in Chapter 1. Access however it should be noted that considerable efforts have been made to increase access among this group through alternative services.⁶⁶

⁶³ Primary Education Sector Analysis in Mongolia 2019. Page 14.

⁶⁴ Mongolia: Public Expenditure Review. Page 112.

⁶⁵ Sub-Sector Study Report on Life-long Education 2019. Page 22

⁶⁶ Preschool Education Sector Study Report. Page 20.

Schools in Ulaanbaatar have the highest average scores for both boys and girls, followed by aimag center schools, then soum schools. Disaggregated data on learning outcomes reveal that there is a learning gap between urban and rural school students-with Soum school students lagging behind their peers in urban areas. In terms of achievement by socio-economic group, learning results among nomadic and minority children are lower than their peers. For example, with 2017 EGRA/EGMA pupils from minority group Kazakh performed 5% lower on EGRA and 10% lower on EGMA.

Parents in rural areas, particularly herder families, face difficult decisions in trying to meet the education needs of their children. Their choices relate to whether or not to separate from their young children by sending them to boarding/dormitory school, separate the families by having the mothers migrate to the soum centers, so that the children can attend school; send children to live with relatives at the soum center to attend school; or delay children's school entry until the children 7-8 or older. These are all difficult choices that impact herder children's enrollment and progression in school.

There is a correlation between dropout rates and regions where agriculture is the main economic activity. As discussed in Chapter 3. Efficiency and Quality, non-enrollment and dropout levels are not equal across the country with children in more rural areas more likely not to enroll or complete primary and secondary education. At the aimag level, dropouts are high in Zavkhan, Uvs and Bayan-Ulgii suggesting the trend is not only related to poverty but also to attitudes within the agriculture sector, and a lack of dormitories in rural areas.⁶⁷

2.4 National minority groups

Two national minority groups in Mongolia underperform across the entire education system - Kazakh and Tuva. There are no national statistics available on primary enrollment and learning achievement of ethnic minority children and poor results risk excluding them from accessing next level education and the labor market.⁶⁸ 5% of all children aged 0-14 are Kazakh and 90% of Kazakh population lives in Bayan Ulgii aimag. ECE enrolment in Bayan Ulgii *aimag* is 60.7%, lower than the national average (79.8%), and Kazakh children are 19% less likely to enroll than non-Kazakh children in the *aimag*.⁶⁹ The Research Unit of National Minority and Mongolian Children Abroad (RSNSMCA) of MIER conducted the study on learning achievement of primary students of the dual language schools in two subjects. The test results show that the Tuva and Kazakh language skills of students have improved since 2013 but performance in Mongolian language has declined.⁷⁰

There is a lack of resources to support the education of children from different ethnic backgrounds and with different linguistic profiles. The law states that every Mongolian has the right to an education in one's native language. The RSNSMCA report highlights that there is no appropriate curriculum for ethnic minority children with different languages and cultures. To date, 23 textbooks have been translated into the Kazakh language covering grades 1-5 as well as some language learning textbooks. Only 4 textbooks have been translated into the Tuva language for grade 1-4.⁷¹ The situation is particularly challenging for children from these groups who also have additional or special needs. Under activity 2.1.20, the 2050 vision includes measures to improve the quality of teaching content and methodologies including in aspects of dual language.

⁶⁷ Primary and Secondary Education Sub-Sector Study Report. June 2019. Page 15.

⁶⁸ Primary Education Sector Analysis in Mongolia 2019. Page 84.

⁶⁹ Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis 2019. Page 61.

⁷⁰ Primary Education Sector Analysis in Mongolia 2019. Page 76.

⁷¹ Primary and Secondary Education Sub-Sector Study Report. June 2019. Page 85.

Lessons can be drawn from implementation of the Education Quality Reform Project (EQRP), which has contributed to improving the reading and mathematics skills of early graders and providing professional development to teachers from dual-language schools. Within the EQRP number of measurements and activities have been initiated, developed and implemented including adult language learning programs for improving the Mongolian language skill of teachers who teach ethnic minority children; strengthened curriculum for teachers who will teach Mongolian language to ethnic minority children; and the support of activities to support the reading of ethnic minority children in their mother tongue.

Despite the implementation experience under EQRP, there is limited understanding of effective bilingual education approaches leading to the specific needs of minority language children not being met and a lack of culturally relevant resources.⁷² Based on the RSNSMCA study, teacher development and a lack of textbooks and learning materials were the most likely cause of underperformance among the Kazakh and Tuva. The higher education institutions training teachers have little experience preparing teachers for dual and multiple language environments and in-service training does not address this aspect of teaching.

There are no readily available statistics on minority groups in higher education however reports suggested that they are underrepresented. A quota was set up in the Khusvgul province in 2017 to increase the number of Tsaatan students. To date, 11 students from the Tsagaannuur soum in Khuvsgul have enrolled in higher education institutions and are receiving a scholarship from the government. Local authorities have affirmative action programs that provide opportunities for Tsaatan minorities to train as teachers, doctors and other such professions.⁷³ The Mongolian Law on Education states in Article 30 Section 1.12 states that regional authorities shall, 'organize works for national minors in learning, inheriting traditional culture and traditions, and communicating in the mother tongue in the school environment.'

2.5 Gender

The Law on Education sets out clear provisions for gender equality in the education sector, most notably: equal rights and equal opportunities to obtain pre-school, primary, secondary, vocational, and higher education, to be enrolled in a professional training and re-training, and to receive a scholarship, and technical counseling. Learning institutions also have an obligation to carry out programs on gender awareness.⁷⁴

General Education

Gender disparities manifest from the lower secondary level and continue to increase at higher levels of the general education system. Kindergarten and primary enrollment rates are consistently high (and equal) among both sexes. Across urban-rural lines, gender gaps are highest at the school in soum level schools, followed by aimag centers, then Ulaanbaatar schools. The gender parity index is highest in the Eastern region of the country while maintaining a national average of 2.39.

⁷² Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis in Mongolia 2019. Page 59

⁷³ Higher Education Sub-sector. Page 9.

⁷⁴ Gender Analysis in Education Sector of Mongolia: Focus on Boys Education, 2009. Page 19.

FIGURE 13. Student gender ratio, 2018-2019 (by regions). Source: Statistics from the MECSS

	West	Khangai	Center	East	Capital city
Total	3,870	3,016	3,997	718	146,027
Female	2,607	2,177	2,410	555	85,803
Male	1,263	839	1,587	163	60,224
Gender parity index	2.06	2.59	1.52	3.4	1.42

At lower secondary and upper secondary levels, boys from the poorest households and those in rural areas are more likely to be out of school. At the upper secondary levels, boys from Eastern aimag (29.1% versus 6.7% for girls) or living in rural bagh (31.6% versus 8.9% for girls) or from poorest households (36.4% versus 9.1% for girls) are more likely to be out of school.⁷⁵ The percentage share of rural female population with higher education and vocational education was higher than rural male population, percentage share of rural male with primary and incomplete secondary education is higher than rural female population. It shows that rural female population is more educated than rural male population.

Assessment of gender differences in learning at 5th, 9th and 12th reveal that girls outperform boys. Across subjects and grade levels gender gap outcomes widen as students advance through the system, i.e. at grade 5 the gender gap between girls’ and boys’ scores is 3.22 points for math, and 7.53 points for Mongolian, however the gap widens at the 9th grade, the difference in scores becomes 6.74 for Math test, 9.67 for Mongolian, 7.69 for Natural Science. Life-long learning education centers are the exception to this trend and reports suggest that this may be linked to the fact that the majority of the boys at these centers have dropped-out of school whereas girls tend to be children with disabilities who are not able to enroll in regular schools.⁷⁶

Boys are more likely to be out of school, especially in rural areas and if they come from poor and/or farming households. Among children of upper secondary school age, 5.1% of girls were out of school compared to 14.2% of boys. In lower secondary, 2% of girls were out of school compared to 6% of boys.⁷⁷ Boys are more likely to be engaged in child labor with figures in Western aimag notably high (29%), and even higher among low income households (32,7%).⁷⁸ The girls’ gender parity ratio is higher in some rural aimag, particularly in Bayankhongor and Dornogobi, particularly farming regions. Reports also suggest that boys are more likely to miss school to help family when moving, or to participate in sports competitions.⁷⁹

Boys outnumber girls in equivalency programs. Three out of four students enrolled in high school equivalency programs are boys. Boys outnumber girls for all ages, starting from 10 and through 19+ years. This trend is prominent in most of the *aimag*.⁸⁰

The school curriculum in lifelong learning is gender segregated, despite provisions in the Law on Education. Technology curriculum is contributing to gender segregation of professions and work by dividing girls and boys into different groups based on gender stereotypes. For example, girls are taught about cooking, sewing technology, and sewing traditional clothes, while boys are taught about technology design, electric circuits, and wood carving.⁸¹

⁷⁵ Gender Analysis in Education Sector of Mongolia: Focus on Boys Education, 2009. Page 46.

⁷⁶ Gender Analysis in Education Sector of Mongolia: Focus on Boys Education, 2009. Page 60.

⁷⁷ Mongolia: Public Expenditure Review. Page 112

⁷⁸ Gender Analysis in Education Sector of Mongolia: Focus on Boys Education, 2009. Page 46.

⁷⁹ Gender Analysis in Education Sector of Mongolia: Focus on Boys Education, 2009. Page 9.

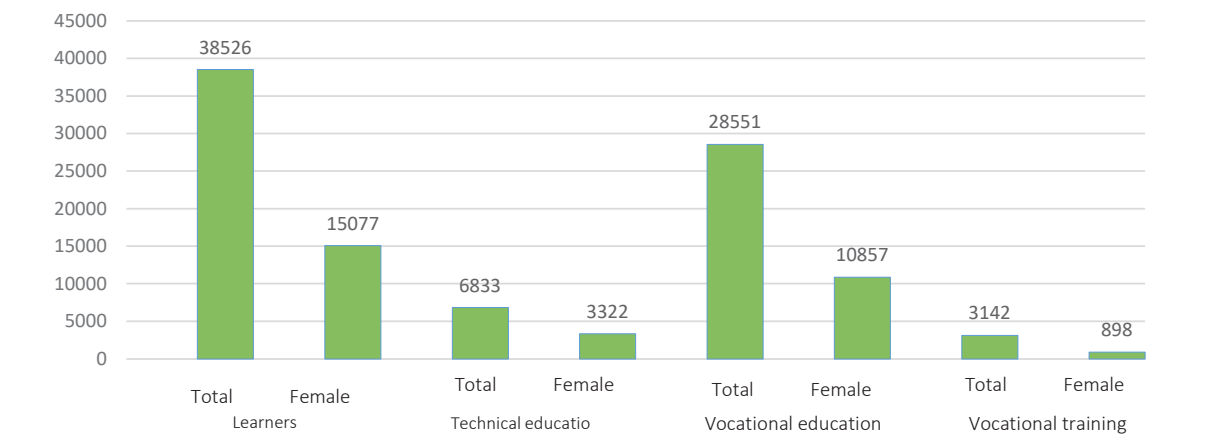
⁸⁰ Gender Analysis in Education Sector of Mongolia: Focus on Boys Education, 2009. Page 33.

⁸¹ Gender Analysis in Education Sector of Mongolia: Focus on Boys Education, 2009. Page 88.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training, and Higher Education

Across all areas of TVET, there are more men than women enrolled. The difference is less marked in vocational training courses. Overall, men represent 59% of all enrollments.

FIGURE 14. Number of students studying TVET by gender. Source VETPICD 2019.



Women perform above men in national university entrance exams in all but two subjects - geography and history. Results show that girls’ average scores are higher than those of boys on most of the subjects with the largest difference of almost 50 points in Mongolian (515.2 versus 474.5), Social Studies (520.6 versus 474.5) and Russian language (554.1 versus 501.5). Boys are slightly outperforming girls in two subjects only, namely in Geography (505.4 versus 492.9) and History (503 versus 497).⁸²

Women outnumber men at all levels of tertiary education and the highest gender gap is observed at master’s level study where around 65% are women. At the Bachelors and Doctoral levels, women make up around 57-58% but the gap at doctoral level is closing.⁸³

In higher education, men lag behind women, yet they have more favorable employment outcomes. 60% of all students aged between 18-24 enrolled in higher education are women. While the young women are represented in greater numbers at upper secondary and higher education, their employment outcomes are less favorable than young men. In the last few years, the number of male students is decreasing compared to their female colleagues. There is no concrete action plan in place to address the gender disparity.⁸⁴

FIGURE 15. Students in tertiary education by level and sex (2019-2019). Source: Gender Analysis in Education Sector of Mongolia: Focus on Boys Education, 2009.

	Total	female	Male	Of which, newly admitted		
				Total	female	Male
All students	157,625	93,552	64,073	44,094	26,373	17,721
% by sex		59.4%	40.6%		59.8%	40.2%
Diploma	145,893	86,477	59,416	33,698	20,005	13,693
% by sex		52.8%	47.2%		59.4%	40.6%
Bachelors	77,189	45,789	31,400	12,813	7,970	4,843

⁸² Gender Analysis in Education Sector of Mongolia: Focus on Boys Education, 2009. Page 64.

⁸³ Gender Analysis in Education Sector of Mongolia: Focus on Boys Education, 2009. Page 108.

⁸⁴ Higher Education Sub-sector. Page 5.

% by sex		58.5%	41.5%		62.2%	37.8%
Masters	22,499	14,554	7,945	6,457	4,343	2,114
% by sex		64.7%	35.3%		67.3%	32.7%
Doctoral	4,219	2,413.00	1,806.00	667	341	326
% by sex		57.2%	42.8%		51.1%	48.9%

There are additional resources to support men accessing higher education, but these are negligible and do not meet the scale of the challenge. At the national level, there are several scholarships available to both male and female students regardless of their gender. However, there is a specific scholarship available for male students who study at teaching and medical science as it was included in the sectorial gender sensitive policy.⁸⁵

2.6 Achievements in equity

Compared to the last 5 years, the number of children in pre-school education has increased by an average of 3.5 points per year. 30,960 or 11.8% of all children in pre-school education are herders’ children. Moreover, 1087 or 0.4% are children with disabilities, 2961 or 1.1% are in social welfare, and 68 or 0.03% are orphans.⁸⁶

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sport is investing in additional training for teachers with the aim of creating a more learner-friendly environment for children with disabilities in primary schools. The Mongolian National University of Education has introduced compulsory credits on inclusive education lessons and master’s degree graduates can write their thesis on inclusive or special needs education.⁸⁷

TVET and life-long education services have provided an entry point into education for excluded groups including marginalized communities and those who fell out of the education system. With an increased focus on practical training (70-80%) over theoretical learning (20-30%), these services have resonated among unemployed youth, youth from poor families, women and persons with disabilities as the skills developed are often more accessible. The VET sector in particular is providing citizens with professional knowledge and skills to enter the labor market through formal and informal education and training, career guidance, medium- and short-term informal training (14 days up to 1 year), as well complete secondary education and elementary professional knowledge.

Non-traditional ways of teaching, especially distance learning, are growing. Efforts are being made by higher education institutions to offer an increased number of online learning options. These changes may increase accessibility for those who face barriers to attend face-to-face classes (financial, logistical). The Education Sector Medium-term Development Plan aims to, ‘Increase higher education access through the promotion of flexible learning and open education.’ Under cross-cutting priorities, the ESMTDP also seeks to, ‘Increase all citizens’ opportunities to access equitable and inclusive education throughout their life’ by promoting open, online and distance learning.⁸⁸ Within the 2050 Vision, the government sets out activities (2.1.43) to increase online learning opportunities.

The 2050 Vision foresees the provision of additional services to support equitable access to education for those who are out of the education system, out of school or lagging behind.

⁸⁵ Gender Analysis in Education Sector of Mongolia: Focus on Boys Education, 2009. Page 112.

⁸⁶ Education Finance and Investment Report. Page 27.

⁸⁷ Primary Education Sector Analysis in Mongolia 2019. Page 82.

⁸⁸ Goal 5.2. priority 1.2



EFFICIENCY AND QUALITY

- 3.1 Early Childhood Education
- 3.2 General Education
- 3.3 Technical and Vocational Education and Training
- 3.4 Higher Education
- 3.5 Life-long learning

3. EFFICIENCY AND QUALITY

Education service quality is defined by how well it creates a necessary learning environment that allows the learner to grow and develop while obtaining knowledge and skills. From this perspective, quality in education is a combination of many correlated elements such as teachers, families, communities, quality control systems, planning, curriculum, resource management, and programs aimed at achieving a learning outcome. Within the limitations of this report, quality is explored as the assessment of learning outcomes, the characteristics of the educational system and the quality of the learning process.

VISION 2050. SECTOR-WIDE ACTIVITIES

- 2.1.6. Establish an independent national council for human resources policy; develop and implement the national qualifications framework in cooperation with the professional associations of the various sectors; establish an online comprehensive labor market information system; and set up the mechanism of updating the database of the Education information system collecting all the data required for technical and tertiary education policy-making and effective utilization.
- 2.1.7. Improve the quality management of overall internal monitoring and evaluation system and foster a culture of internal monitoring and evaluation making at all levels of the educational institutions.
- 2.1.8. Strengthen the monitoring and evaluation institutional structure by transferring to the independent monitoring system that uses internationally accepted methodologies for quality assurance of educational institutions and teaching and training programs.
- 2.1.32. Implement a comprehensive human resources policy in the education sector, establish a system that creates an opportunity to identify the career development and professional development as per the capability-oriented merit system principles, ensure gender balance in human resources, and provide housing for teachers who are coming to work in local areas.
- 2.1.36. Renew the workload standards for teachers of kindergartens and general education institutions taking into account their duties, responsibilities, and workplace, make the standards more flexible, introduce the performance-based assessment of teachers’ work, improve the pay and reward system for teachers, and gradually improve the real salary of teachers ensuring that teacher’s salaries to be among the top 10% of the national average salary scale.
- 2.1.37. Establish the quality assurance procedures and criteria for the training of teachers, improve the requirements for training curricula, and strengthen the periodical teacher’s certification and licensure system of the educational institutions.
- 2.1.38. Renew the followings, the requirements for the management personnel of the kindergartens and general education institutions; the training and appointment system of the management personnel for educational institutions; and the terms of references for the management personal adding more duties on functions of quality assurance of teaching; and improve the performance-based assessment, and strengthen the management capacity of the educational institutions.
- 2.1.39. Reform the professional development system of teachers and staff members of educational institutions and strengthen the support mechanisms for teachers’ self-development.

- 2.1.40. Establish the teachers’ training centers based on tertiary education institutions by strengthening the institutions that support teachers’ professional development and training methods.
- 2.1.41. Promote multi-sectoral involvement in training and retraining of teachers and human resources of educational institutions by expanding the participation of the government, non-governmental, private educational institutions.
- 2.1.44. Improve teachers’ capacity and skills in the use of ICT in teaching, facilitation of online and distance learning programs, and the English language. Upgrade the ICT training curriculum and content up to the internationally accepted level for training on electronic literacy and cybersecurity of the learners. Intensify ICT skills building training and other activities for citizens and the general public and encourage the participation of all types of training organizations in the training.
- 5.1.5 Establish a framework for evidence-based policy-making that requires at least 70 percent of all policies to be research-based.

Sector-wide achievements

The country has been striving to increase quality over the past decade. A recurring theme across the many programs, targets and frameworks set in place in Mongolia is to improve quality and meet international standards. Mongolian students struggle at key stages and do not have the right skills to enter the job market as detailed in the sections below. The World Bank’s Human Capital Index calculates Mongolia’s HCI as 63% meaning children in Mongolia will be 63% productive as they would have been had they received full education and health services. Based on this indicator there is scope for Mongolia to boost its efficiency by strengthening its education outcomes. The 2050 Vision strengthens this goal with over 25 activities focused on improving quality, the majority of which are concentrated in the general education level. There is also a call for a general shift towards more frequent and more accurate evaluation, both internal and external.

A major challenge in the sector with regards to increasing quality and efficiency has been frequent changes in policy, curricula, programs, and assessment approaches. As detailed in each section below, many reforms and changes have been poorly implemented with little consideration of teachers, frontline staff or learners. Nevertheless, there have been positive signs that the sector’s governing bodies are seeking to engage more stakeholders in ongoing reform proposals, including students, parents, teachers, sector leaders, international organizations and foreign educational institutions. The 2050 Vision also explicitly calls for fact-based policymaking and planning (activity 5.1.5).

Data collection largely happens at the grass-root level with inadequate standardization procedures to ensure consistency. The introduction of the Education Sector Information System allowed for extensive data collection and most teachers welcome this development however data on higher education, TVET and life-long learning is still lacking. While available data is used to calculate the variable cost per child for pre-schools and schools, there is scope to further disaggregate to capture socio-economic factors related to equity and access. Many teachers reported that the system is complex and the inflexibility to capture unplanned data.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Primary Education Sector Analysis in Mongolia 2019. Page39

3.1 Early Childhood Education

The focus within the sub-sector over the past decade has undoubtedly been on increasing access, however new policies and plans highlight a shift from simply preparing children for school, towards promoting emotional and intellectual development to create a foundation for life-long learning.⁹⁰ These changes are captured in the 2050 Vision however the focus is mostly on the learning environment and teacher training.

2050 VISION. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

- 2.1.12. To ensure accessibility of pre-school education to young children, increase the number of kindergarten facilities and child beds gradually following the demand and supply, keep the class size at required standards, and create a child-friendly, healthy and safe environment for every child following needed child safety standards.
- 2.1.13. Facilitate a series of activities aimed at improving the quality of pre-school services and training, agreeing with pre-school learning is an essential and fundamental stage of child development.
- 2.1.14. Provide opportunities and conditions for equal access to preschool education to children of herder, migrant, low-income families and children with disabilities and special needs and promote the participatory child development through improving the education of their parents.
- 2.1.16. Provide conditions for kindergarten teachers to be able to improve their teaching quality, develop and implement teaching activities, observe children, study, and self-develop. Two-shift teachers will be assigned to each class with a size of more than 30 children starting from 2021, but beginning in 2023, to every class.
- 2.1.18. Establish a legal framework that aimed to increase the quality and accessibility of child-care facilities for children aged 1-2 years and adopt and enforce the regulatory requirements and standards for child care service providers.
- 9.1.1 To ensure accessibility of pre-school education to young children, increase the number of kindergarten facilities and child beds gradually following the demand and supply, keep the class size at required standards.
- 9.1.2 Ensure realization of learning standards in kindergartens and schools.

Assessment of learning outcomes

M Mongolia lags behind other similar countries in terms of school readiness rates. The 2016, World Bank study on the quality of pre-school education institutions found that State owned kindergartens scored higher in quality index 4.1, performed similarly in program scales 4.17, and literacy 4.16 scores, but scored lower in math and number environment with 3.63 scores.⁹¹ The school preparedness of 5 years old is not sufficient at national level, in particular among 5 year old children from poorer households as only 63.1% are school ready, 27.2 % lower than other age groups.⁹²

In Mongolia, assessment of a child’s progress has traditionally been focused on procedural knowledge and not on physical, cognitive and emotional development. The results and analysis from Early Grade Reading Assessment and Early Grade Mathematics Assessment indicate that there was considerable focus on children’s procedural knowledge (recall from memory). Where on average children were able to recognize numbers, they struggled with patterns, additions and subtractions.⁹³ With the reform of the Core curriculum in 2014-2015, the Early Childhood Development Standard (ECDS) was discontinued as part of a major shift away from ‘preparing children for school’ towards human and personal development, creativity and basic life skills.⁹⁴ In the 2014-2024 Government Policy on Education, evaluation in kindergarten included educational content, standards, training technology, textbooks as defined by the state and evaluation of quality and effectiveness.⁹⁵

Quality evaluation and monitoring in kindergartens is generally insufficient and produces inconsistent results. The framework that currently exists is comprised of two evaluation procedures: internal monitoring by kindergarten directors using a set of indicators provided by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sport that are then gathered on the Education Sector Information System; and external monitoring and evaluating by the Education and Culture Departments (ECD) of the aimag and city where the kindergarten is situated.

FIGURE 16. Sample of quantitative and qualitative indicators set out by the MECSS.

Quantitative indicators	Quantitative indicators
1. Enrollment	1. Organization management
2. Learning quality, outcome	2. Curriculum, methodology
3. Human resource for teaching	3. Teacher development, evaluation
4. Financial and material funds	4. Access of the education service
	5. Child’s right and participation
	6. Finance and resource management
	7. Partnership of school, parents, community, and private sector

The quality assessment and assurance systems are not aligned with the curriculum. The quality assurance system is led by the Education Evaluation Center (EEC) and is conducted through annual randomized surveys on child development progress. The survey covers 10% of all children enrolled in kindergartens and assesses the development level of pre-school age children, detecting development differences between children. The study measures outcome results of the child whereas the core curriculum methodology is primarily aimed at the learning environment, teachers and parents. Unfortunately, this survey is not aligned with the core curriculum introduced in 2015 and focuses primarily on school readiness and therefore offers limited insights on the quality of current pre-school education.⁹⁶

⁹⁰ Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis 2019. Page 20.
⁹¹ Pre-Primary Education in Mongolia: Access, Quality of Service Delivery and Child Development Outcomes, 2016, World Bank
⁹² Education Sector Medium-term Development Plan 2021-2030.

⁹³ Primary and Secondary Education Sub-Sector Study Report. June 2019. Page 38.
⁹⁴ Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis 2019. Page 20.
⁹⁵ Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis 2019. Page 20.
⁹⁶ Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis 2019. Page 30.

According to the source reports, current mechanisms to monitor quality do not sufficiently consider the factors to successful learning: physical environment, program activity and care to support the natural development of a child. Furthermore, the indicators provided by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sport are mismatched with the core curriculum according to reports. The current mechanisms may also add to the workload of kindergarten teachers and managers without offering useful insights that can increase quality.⁹⁷ Reports consistently recommend that kindergartens conduct self-evaluations and not rely solely on external assessments.⁹⁸ The 2050 Vision explicitly sets out a target on supporting kindergarten teachers to improve their ability to observe children.

System - accreditation, kindergarten spaces and class sizes

Impressive gains have been realized in the last five years in access to early childhood education and these developments are captured by the internal efficiency indicators such as net and gross enrollments (presented in Chapter 1. Access and Chapter 2. Equity) including increase in the number of children and staff at the kindergarten level. Nevertheless, the following areas have been highlighted in the source reports as areas for development to improve the quality of education in the early childhood development sub-sector.

There is currently no national accreditation system for kindergartens in place, although it is foreseen. An accreditation system would improve quality in the sub-sector by ensuring all institutions meet standards but no system is currently in place. The Mongolian National Council for Education Accreditation (MNCEA) is currently completing the accreditation process for universities and will move on to kindergartens from 2023.⁹⁹

The physical environment in kindergartens may be compromising learning quality. According to a 2013 Needs Assessment Study on School and Kindergarten Buildings,¹⁰⁰ 23% of total buildings sampled had been in use for more than 30 years and their functional duration had expired. While this study was a small sample group, the reports suggest that there may be a need to remove, rebuild, or upgrade many learning facilities as sanitation and hygiene standards are not met. Kitchen equipment is not professional, and suppliers of food and vegetables do not provide test documents from labs in some kindergartens and there are little or no kitchen flow standards in place. The situation is reportedly more concerning in institutions providing alternative programs and/or mobile kindergartens.¹⁰¹ The 2050 Vision 2050, under activity 9.1.1, calls for, ‘a child-friendly, healthy and safe environment for every child following needed child safety standards’.

The average class size for kindergartens in Mongolia stands at 36.9 in public kindergartens and 22.6 in the private sector. Numbers vary between regions but more marked is the differences between urban and rural kindergartens with numbers close to 60 in some overcrowded urban areas.¹⁰² Overcrowding due to insufficient classroom space and beds is seriously compromising learning environments in kindergartens. Some reports highlight a lack of outdoor play areas and modular spaces as additional challenges to gym, music or testing. The 2050 Vision seeks to keep pre-school class sizes at the ‘required standard’. Special mention is given to the extreme overcrowding in Ulaanbaatar to increase the number of kindergarten facilities and child beds gradually following the demand and supply by 2050 (activity 9.1.1). The 2050 Vision also outlines goals to ensure daily dietary intake in kindergartens is met (2.1.14).

⁹⁷ Education Sector Medium-term Development Plan 2021-2030. Page 53.

⁹⁸ Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis 2019. Page 17.

⁹⁹ Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis 2019. Page 30.

¹⁰⁰ Preschool Education Sector Study Report. June 2019. Page 34.

¹⁰¹ Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis 2019. Page 24.

¹⁰² Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis 2019. Page 30.

Process - teaching conditions, curriculum and parent engagement

Many teachers have insufficient opportunities to access professional in-service training and this hampers the quality of their teaching. The Education Sector Medium-term Mid-term Development Plan 2021-2030 acknowledges that teachers’ professional capacity is a key determinant of early childhood and that pre-primary teachers have limited opportunities to improve their professional development continuously. According to one study, only one in every three kindergarten teachers has completed professional training up to 24 credits and most of them are teaching in cities.¹⁰³ Teachers in alternative services are receiving significantly less professional training.

More kindergarten teachers will be required and pre-service training should be standardized. The sub-sector has shown an impressive capacity to recruit teachers, but more are required to meet these targets despite a forecasted decrease in pre-primary children of 1% by 2030.¹⁰⁴ Not all higher education institutions that are training kindergarten teachers follow a standardized and accredited curriculum. A questionnaire among kindergarten teachers suggested that there is a significant difference in knowledge and skills between graduates of private teacher training institutions and those from rural institutions. The 2050 Vision under activity 2.1.13. seeks to improve the pre-school service training and ensure the conditions for teachers to improve their teaching.

Kindergarten teacher salaries are lower than the national average by 33%. The average monthly salary of the kindergarten teacher in 2018 was 780.280 MNT, lower than the national average by 377.620 MNT or 32.6%. This monthly base salary accounts for 55-60% of the total monthly payment as overtime, numerous supplements and quarterly incentives are commonplace.¹⁰⁵ The increased private sector participation enhances the opportunities for parents and students to choose schools and programs, but it brings some difficulties for public schools as there is a trend for qualified teachers to move to private schools for higher salaries.¹⁰⁶

Standard working hours for kindergarten and school teachers is regulated as 40 hours per week however some reports claim kindergarten teachers are working up to 50 hours per week.¹⁰⁷ Excessive workloads are reported as one of the main causes for kindergarten teachers not seizing opportunities to continuously improve their professional capacity (see above) or prepare for training activities. Teachers working in alternative services have fewer contact hours with children.

A recurring challenge identified in kindergartens is a shortage of adequate and appropriate teaching and learning materials, including age appropriate toys and play equipment. Without such resources, teachers are forced to improvise and invest unforeseen time in producing their own resources. As numbers have increased in kindergartens across the country, spending on resources has failed to keep abreast meaning many kindergartens are using worn or outdated resources (discussed at length in Chapter 4. Education Cost and Finance). The situation is particularly dire in alternative services as a result of severe under investment. In many kindergartens, parents and families provide material or financial contributions to bridge the gap and improve the learning environment (discussed in Chapter 2. Equity and Chapter 4. Education Cost and Finance). The sub-sector risks lagging behind in investment in information and computer technology. There is an average of one computer per 1.2 teachers in kindergartens across the country, with 20% of institutions not connected to the internet. Such conditions may prevent teachers from accessing useful resources, engaging in training activities and keeping up-to-date with sector developments and practices.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ Preschool Education Sector Study Report. June 2019. Page 38

¹⁰⁴ Preschool Education Sector Study Report. June 2019. Page 30.

¹⁰⁵ Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis 2019. Page 41.

¹⁰⁶ Preschool Education Sector Study Report. Page 33.

¹⁰⁷ Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis 2019. Page 8.

¹⁰⁸ Preschool Education Sector Study Report. June 2019. Page 34.

The core curriculum focuses on individual development of children and has moved away from an exclusive focus on school readiness, yet some concerns remain around standards, training of teachers and open learning. Child development standards were approved in 2011 and informed the development of a pre-primary core curriculum in 2014. The core of the program is based on 6 learning domains: physical-health, behavior-communication, language-environment, mathematical imagination, music, and art. The level is set in each area according to the knowledge, skills and habits acquired. The curriculum seeks to empower teachers to communicate and co-organize training and educational activities in collaboration with parents and other relevant organizations. Initial training was provided during the first year however some reports highlight a lack of proper training for teachers; unclear assessment standards; little consideration of open learning initiatives. The core curriculum has also yet to be adapted to those teaching alternative services.¹⁰⁹

Efforts to engage parents in the pre-school education of their children are inadequate. The Law on Pre-primary Education stipulates that kindergartens must offer activities for parents and, while most have a program in place, almost half are unable to implement them owing to insufficient funding.¹¹⁰ A nation-wide textbook leasing system was in place to support parents reinforce learning at home however reports indicate that this has been discontinued in many kindergartens. A survey conducted with parents in the framework of the Education Sector Medium-term Development Plan suggests that the majority of them (82%) believe that it is important to support the development of their child by working with their children at home.¹¹¹ There is a further shortfall in parenting education programs for children outside the pre-primary education services and those accessing alternative services. Some aimag, most notably Tuv, have been actively campaigning to promote child and parental education programs¹¹²

3.2 General Education

Internal efficiency indicators such as net enrollment rates, gross enrollment rates, dropout rates, school completion rates, and school progression in Mongolia project a favorable learning environment but improvements are needed in a number of areas, most notably in teacher training, class sizes, teacher workloads and the overall learning outcomes.

2050 VISION. GENERAL EDUCATION

- 2.1.19. Create an enabling environment for educational institutions as per required standards by improving the school dormitory, green development facilities, sports and art halls, canteen, and information technology classrooms following the specific rules, provide an accessible learning environment for those students with disabilities, and make the child and user-friendly, safe water, toilet, hygiene facilities available in schools.
- 2.1.20. Improve the quality of education from the primary and secondary schools and the teaching contents and methods reflecting the Mongolian history, language, culture, national heritage, customs, patriotic views, personality formation and development, dual language, and universal values of humanity.

- 2.1.24. Improve the management of the school dormitory system and child protection at the dormitories, setting the regulations that up to 10 teaching hours of those teachers who worked in the pieces of training and other activities for dormitory students to include in teachers’ overall workload.
- 2.1.34. Develop the teachers’ standards for all school levels based on the skills and knowledge required for the subject areas such as professional knowledge, teaching methods, research skills, ICT, foreign languages, etc., and implement them in line with teacher’s development and human resource policies.
- 2.1.35. Train and regularly re-train the elementary school teachers and specialized teachers required for the general education institutions as per population growth dynamics.

Data Collection and Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Data collection and management has improved resulting in more accurate efficiency indicators. The Education Sector Information System was introduced in 2008 to host the data collected by the ministry through the quality assurance mechanisms. ESIS gathers based on the student registration numbers thus eliminating overlapping registration of students at different schools and providing better oversight on dropouts. ESIS covers all private and public schools in Mongolia.¹¹³ There is however a lack of capacity to analyze the data and ensure that analyzed and processed data are used for decision-making and planning. According to the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), a well-functioning information system is at the heart of effective planning and management. The 2050 Vision sets out an activity, 2.2.23, to increase fact-based policy decision-making.

The robustness of the quality monitoring mechanisms stands to be improved. With the introduction of the core curriculum the student assessment procedure was revised in 2013 then again in 2018. Internal assessment is completed by the educational institution and quality assessment is completed by aimag local government bodies. There are also data collection mechanisms in place at the national level, including

- Internal assessment: Associated with the changes in content of primary and secondary education, procedures for the internal assessment of students’ knowledge, skills and maturity moved towards a more competency-based set of standards. Whereas previously a grade was given to the student at the end of the year, the system has evolved towards a more comprehensive evaluation of assessment that is diagnostic, formative and summative. Progress is evaluated based on change in the student’s knowledge, skills, and attitude. These changes seek to bring the sub-sector in line with international changes in education. The grading levels of primary education were reduced to make it easier for parents and students to understand.¹¹⁴
- National monitoring: The Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sport uses regulation indicators (see sample table in section above- Early Childhood Education). This approach provides information about who achieves standards, completes the year and drops-out, but little detail on trends or the causes behind the figures. There are concerns over the quality of this data collection as teachers receive little training on the methodology and the task is often seen as an administrative burden that is completed by staff with little expertise in this area. Teachers also highlight that one indicator covers a range of skills (i.e. problem solving and creativity) but the system only allows for one grade to be attributed.

¹⁰⁹ Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis 2019. Page 74.
¹¹⁰ Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis 2019. Page 56.
¹¹¹ Education Sector Medium-term Development Plan 2021-2030. Page 51.
¹¹² Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis 2019. Page 65.

¹¹³ Education Data Analysis Report. Page 21.
¹¹⁴ Primary Education Sector Analysis in Mongolia 2019. Page 44.

- National Learning Assessment: Since 2015, grade 5, 9 and 12 students take student learning assessments to monitor achievement at completion of primary, lower and upper secondary cycles. These exams are administered by the Education Evaluation Center and provide national averages and trends across regions. Performance levels for exams and quality assessments have not changed since 2016 with a 20% discrepancy between exam results and quality assessments.¹¹⁵ According to reports, some teachers feel that these exams must be revised in order to ensure they correspond fully with the core curriculum that is being taught.¹¹⁶
- Upper secondary high school students also sit the higher education entrance exam. The goal of higher education entrance exams is to establish the level of knowledge and skills of students who seek to continue their study at universities and colleges. The exam covers ten subjects: mathematics, Mongolian language, social studies, English language, Russian language, geography, physics, biology, chemistry, and Mongolian history. The examination is developed as a blueprint test and is based on Bloom’s taxonomy of learning. A threshold score is set for national universities and colleges.¹¹⁷ The exam is set by the Education Evaluation Center.
- As of 2021, Mongolia will also join the Programme for International Students Assessment and establish a baseline.

In order for Mongolia to effectively harnessing human capital in support of Vision 2050. building knowledge and skills and expanding the capabilities of learners is required. Poor learning outcomes are hindering the education sector in Mongolia. As revealed by the high percentage of children with low scores on assessment tests-only 41.2% proficient in mathematics, 37.6% in Mongolian language studies, and 46.4% in social studies at grade 5 (Education Quality Assessment 2018)-improving education quality and learning at all grades is a key challenge for the system.

Despite a lack of research in the field, family background, pre-school and school environment are major factors in general education performance in Mongolia. The Education Evaluation Center conducted an investigation on students from grades 5, 9 & 12 to assess the knowledge, skills and attitudes obtained by the students, as well as their application skills.¹¹⁸ The investigation revealed influencing factors that could impact student achievement and the following issues were highlighted: Students’ family background and income sufficiency; Pre-school attendance; School environment and context; Teacher education level and professional ranks.¹¹⁹

Within the 2050 Vision, there are numerous mentions of improving monitoring and evaluation systems at all levels of the educational institutions however it is particularly noteworthy that activity 2.1.8 calls for, ‘2.1.8. Strengthening the monitoring and evaluation institutional structure by transferring to the independent monitoring system that uses internationally accepted methodologies for quality assurance of educational institutions and teaching and training programs.’

System - internal efficiency concerns and class size

The number of children dropping out is reducing and the survival rate is high across primary and lower secondary. As detailed in Chapter 1. Access, and Chapter 2. Equity, enrollment is high across the general education sub-sector, and the gap between the gross and net enrollment rate has been narrowing over the past decade suggesting late and early enrollment have decreased. The table below provides the drop-out rates from Grades 1-5.

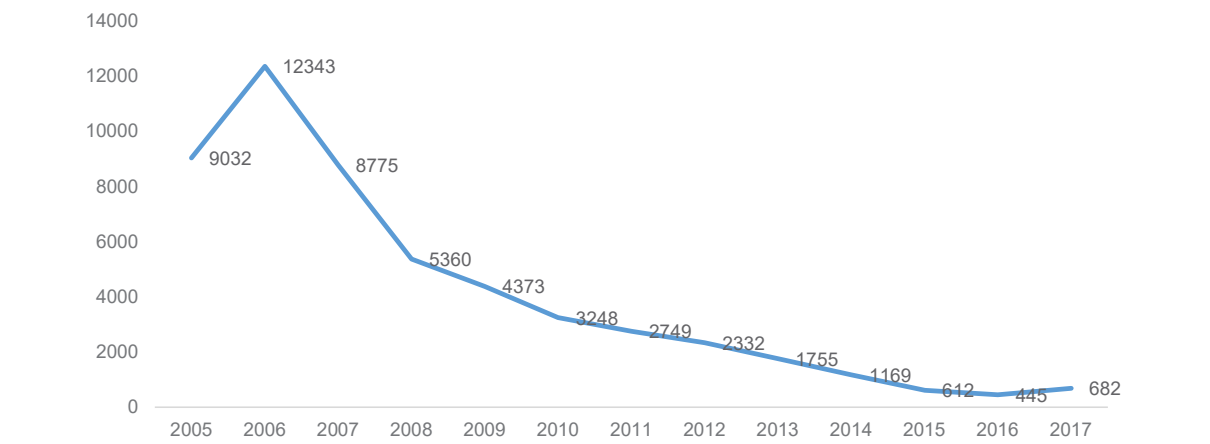
¹¹⁵ Primary and Secondary Education Sub-Sector Study Report. June 2019. Page 39.
¹¹⁶ Primary Education Sector Analysis in Mongolia 2019. Page 48.
¹¹⁷ Higher Education Sub-sector. Page 25.
¹¹⁸ Education in Mongolia: A Country Report. Page 231.
¹¹⁹ Primary and Secondary Education Sub-Sector Study Report. June 2019. Page 41.

FIGURE 17. Promotion, repetition and dropout rates. Source: Primary and Secondary Education Sub-Sector Study Report. June 2019

Шалгуур үзүүлэлтүүд	1-р анги	2-р анги	3-р анги	4-р анги	5-р анги
Анги дэвшсэн	99.0%	99.5%	99.3%	99.5%	97.3%
Анги улирсан	0.6%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Завсардсан	0.5%	0.4%	0.6%	0.5%	2.7%

Promotion rates from grades 1 to 4 are steady however there is a reduction at grade 5. Internal efficiency coefficient was 0.96 in 2016, and 0.94 in 2015. However, this coefficient cannot be estimated with certainty because of the shift in the education structure to a 12-year system. nevertheless, the number of children dropping out between 6 and 14 is falling overall.¹²⁰ Some reports highlight that there may be a focus on promotion at the expense of learning. Students are progressing through the system without achieving the knowledge, skills and competencies.

FIGURE 18. School dropout children age 6-14. Source: Primary Education Sector Analysis in Mongolia 2019.



There is need for the system to consider more effective utilization and rationalization of the teaching force. Class sizes vary according to grade and geographical location, with the starkest contrast between urban versus rural schools. At the national level, the average STR in general education schools declined but remains comparable to Mongolia’s middle-income peers. Levels in the primary stages (28 students per teacher) are among the highest compared selected comparators including South Africa, Indonesia, and the Philippines.¹²¹ There are on average 30.3 students per class enrolled at primary classes, 26.9 students at lower secondary classes, and 30.3 students in upper secondary class. Low student teacher ratios may also be attributed to an increase in the number of schools operating in bagh where class sizes are smaller. The main concern is that these national figures cover variants between urban and rural schools and that rationalization is needed in order to better utilize the teaching force. With few exceptions, the majority of overcrowded classes are in urban areas. In the capital city oversized classes are the norm in state owned schools.¹²² The 2050 Vision seeks to increase the number of school buildings under activity 2.1.20 to increase student seats and maintain class sizes.

¹²⁰ Primary secondary 28
¹²¹ Mongolia: Public Expenditure Review - Growing without Undue Borrowing- Enhancing Efficiency of Spending and Revenue 2019. Page 113.
¹²² Primary and Secondary Education Sub-Sector Study Report. June 2019. Page 27.

Teacher numbers will have to be increased in primary and secondary schools to account for the demographic shifts currently passing through the education system. The number of teachers more than doubled between 2015 and 2017 resulting in a total of 27,214 teachers (29% are teachers, 26% are assistant teachers, 2% are physical education teachers, 9% are music teachers and 1% teach alternative programs). Of these, 1,591 teachers and 1,536 assistant teachers are working in private kindergartens.¹²³ The Government of Mongolia has set ambitious targets to reduce class sizes to 25 children per teacher by 2025, and 20 children per teacher by 2030.¹²⁴ To achieve these goals, the sector will need to recruit 23,576 subject teachers.¹²⁵ Furthermore, the 2018 Teacher Development Support Law foresees the supply of assistant teachers to grades 1-2 with class size more than 44 pupils, this law is effective as of 2019.¹²⁶

Capital spending on the construction of new schools is not fact- or needs-based. There is a stark contrast in coefficients between urban and rural schools at the national level. Of the 811 schools assessed in one study, 374 are operating under capacity, while 88 are operating over two shifts. This can be explained by the fact that all *soum* and *aimag*, regardless of population size, have secondary schools. This clearly raises concerns about the efficient use of resources in some areas. The number of schools operating with 3 shifts is also concerning.

FIGURE 19. Coefficient by type and location of school. Source: Education Finance and Investment.

Shift coefficient distribution	Property type	Total	Western region	Khangai region	Central region	Eastern region	UB
Up to 0-0.1	State-owned school	24	2	10	6	4	2
	Private school	11	0	0	0	3	8
0.1-0.5	State-owned school	59	19	14	19	6	3
	Private school	53	0	6	6	7	40
0.5-1	State-owned school	181	46	43	41	23	28
	Private school	64	6	3	6	1	48
1-1.5	State-owned school	187	53	47	40	15	32
	Private school	15	1	1	0	4	9
	State and private joint school	1					1
1.5-2	State-owned school	117	21	28	20	17	31
	Private school	2	1	1	0		0
More than 2	State-owned school	87	6	21	11	3	46
	Private school	1	1	0	0	0	0
Total		802	156	174	149	83	248

¹²³ World Bank, 2016. Page 112
¹²⁴ Sustainable Development Vision 2030 of Mongolia
¹²⁵ Education Data Analysis Report. June 2019. Page 36.
¹²⁶ Primary and Secondary Education Sub-Sector Study Report. June 2019. Page 45

Process - curriculum, resources and teaching

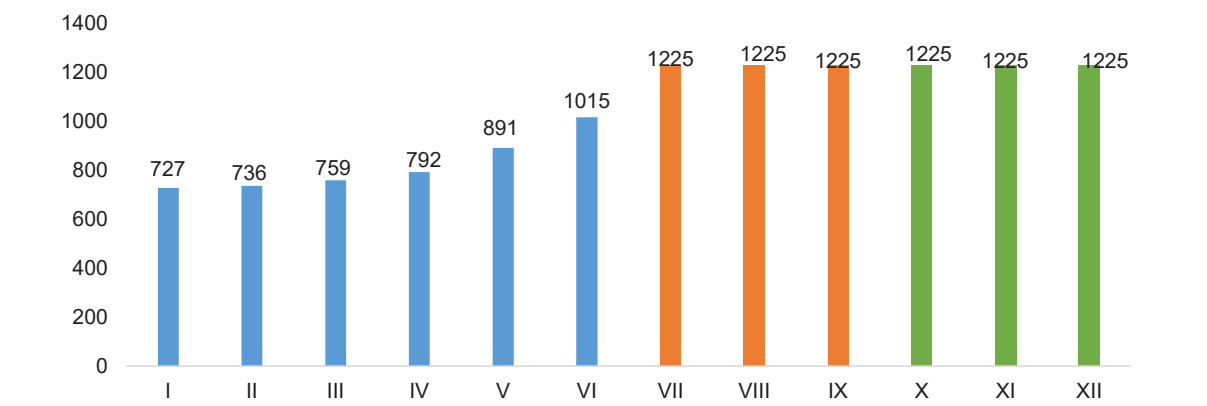
Curriculum and Resources

Frequent changes in education syllabus, curriculum and textbooks over the past have been detrimental to the quality of education.¹²⁷ Numerous curriculum reforms have made it difficult for parents to assess what their children learn in school and has required teachers to quickly adopt new methodologies.¹²⁸ The core curriculum has now been developed along with the accompanying management policy to allow for partial updates in cycles without complete overhaul.¹²⁹ Revision of the curriculum will likely be guided by advances in new technologies and the result of the Programme for International Student Assessment baseline assessment to be conducted in 2021. The 2050 Vision includes an activity to improve the quality of teaching content and methods (activity 2.2.20) which may be concerning given the frequency of curriculum change in the past 20 years. Under the 2050 Vision (activity 2.1.8) there are also signs that the government will continue efforts to align with international standards and assessments.

Concerns were raised over the curriculum development and implementation. The curriculum is competency-based and allows students to choose elective subjects in upper secondary based on their talent, interest and career orientation. One important issue that has been raised regarding this practice is the linkage between the student’s selected curriculum and the next level of education and training activities, in particular elective subjects in secondary with admission exams for universities.¹³⁰ The Mongolian Institute of Education Research is in charge of curriculum development but has limited funding to visit schools across the country and identify problems related to the curriculum.

Concerns have also been raised about the workload on students under the new core curriculum. The total learning hour for primary students (grades 1-5) is 3,905 annually, junior secondary (grades 6-9) 4,690, and senior secondary (grades 10-12) 3,675. Compared to OECD countries, primary and junior secondary student learning is 844 more hours.¹³¹ The Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sport assigned the Mongolian Institute for Educational Research to conduct validation assessment on the curriculum content and identify possibilities to lessen the load.

FIGURE 20. Annual learning hours by Grade as of 2018. Source: Primary and Secondary Education Sub-Sector Study Report. June 2019



¹²⁷ Primary Education Sector Analysis in Mongolia 2019. Page 91
¹²⁸ Primary Education Sector Analysis in Mongolia 2019. Page 55.
¹²⁹ Education Sector Medium-term Development Plan 2021-2030.
¹³⁰ Primary and Secondary Education Sub-Sector Study Report. Page 33.
¹³¹ Primary and Secondary Education Sub-Sector Study Report. June 2019. Page 30

Teachers lack necessary knowledge and skills to teach the core curriculum, especially in the initial implementation years. Little time was given to teachers to assimilate training before the curriculum was rolled-out. Many reports highlight that teachers still feel they need more training and capacity building on the core curriculum. Other stakeholders such as students and parents are not well informed of the elective subjects introduced for upper secondary and the student assessment and evaluation system does not reflect the objectives of the core curriculum.¹³² Under activity 2.1.35 of the 2050 Vision, the government commits to re-train teachers working in the general education sub-sector.

Applying the core curriculum is a challenge in many rural schools where teacher and student numbers are lower. Rural schools have fewer students meaning that electives cannot be offered as the class does not meet the 22-student threshold. Some Schools also lack science labs and equipment to conduct various experiments and activities called for in certain elective subjects. Some teachers believe that the current core curriculum has too much content and that there is a misalignment between content and learning objectives. The 2050 vision under activity 2.2.19 aims to create an enabling environment for schools however the text refers specifically to art, ITC and sports facilities over science labs.

New or revised textbooks were not developed and distributed in line with the curriculum change. Only 16% of the total textbooks that were foreseen by the market were actually purchased in 2018 and reports suggest some students do not have access to all the textbooks they require. A pilot project on textbook leasing was developed with support from the Asian Development Bank and implemented at 80% of all public schools in 2010. Textbook supply and accessibility was increased by 45% by 2014 with 85% of lower and upper secondary school students having textbooks. This initiative was stopped in 2018 when the new core curriculum came into place and estimates suggest supply to secondary schools has dramatically decreased although data is limited.¹³³ Reports suggest that resource shortage is most prominent in central and eastern regions.

There is a strong political will to engage stakeholders in the development of new learning resources but the practice does not always follow. In addition to concerns over the availability of textbooks outlined above, concerns have been raised over the development of resources. The policy on development of learning resources has been amended three times since 1998 but seeks to engage stakeholders in the process through expert teams composed of teachers, researchers, citizens and parents.¹³⁴ In 2017, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sport uploaded textbooks to their learning platform to gather comments on 118 textbooks of grades 1-11.¹³⁵ Over 12,000 comments were received from teachers and a number of trends were identified: content is difficult to teach, there are too many subjects and some content is overlapping; Content of some subjects is not evenly distributed; Some learning objectives are too general, difficult to understand even for teachers and too broad.

Teaching

Throughout the source reports, the gap between schools in rural and urban is consistently attributed to the teachers’ professional capacity. This section sets out the issues raised at pre-service training, in-service training and the related issue of teacher workload. As of 2018, there were 49,400 staff in 803 operating schools in Mongolia. Out of 49,400 staff, 30,900 are teachers, 3,000 are managers and 15,400 non-teaching staffs. 81.8% of all teacher are female. Primary school teachers represent 35.3% of total teachers and the remaining are secondary teachers. As of 2018-2019, 0.1% of teachers held a PhD, 14.3% held a masters degree, 73.3% a bachelor degree, and the remaining 9.5% held a diploma.¹³⁶

Pre-service training is not standardized, and the quality of graduates varies with private and rural high education institutions producing the least skilled graduates. High school graduates who complete general secondary education or equivalent education level are eligible to take the university general entrance examination to earn a place on a pre-service teacher training course at university. Aspiring teachers can also qualify through a combination of teaching diploma and other relevant qualifications. While teacher training standards set requirements for content, assessment, length of study, and teaching and learning environment for undergraduate programs, there are concerns raised over the quality assurance measures in place.¹³⁷ Furthermore, some unaccredited universities offer teacher training and follow unaccredited curricula, although the number is decreasing. In most universities, training is imparted through seminars, lectures, as well as practical sessions, experience sharing and discussion. Universities in Ulaanbaatar, most notably the Mongolian National University for Education, offer higher quality teacher training than rural universities. This leads to a capacity gap between graduates and, as most rural students find work in rural schools, the quality of the teaching in rural area is lower. The 2050 Vision set the improvement of teacher training a key activity (2.1.37) including for pre- and in-service training.

The content of in-service training does not provide the necessary knowledge and required skills for teachers to develop professionally. Since 2013, the Institute for Teaching Professional Development has been delivering teacher in-service training both online and over face-to-face five day training sessions.¹³⁸ Compulsory training expenditure has decreased over the last five years and training expenditure for one teacher halved from 2013 levels.¹³⁹ This may be owing to increased efficiency and the use of online learning but raises concerns in some reports over quality. Prior to 2013, the teacher professional development activities in the country used to be conducted by various projects and programs structured at school, local areas, regional and national levels. Other institutions such as the Education Research Institute and some universities also provide training. Under activity 2.1.34 of the 2050 Vision, the government will, ‘develop the teachers’ standards for all school levels based on the skills and knowledge required for the subject areas such as professional knowledge, teaching methods, research skills, ICT, foreign languages, etc., and implement them in line with teacher’s development and human resource policies.’ In addition to activity 2.1.37 mentioned above, the 2050 vision also includes measures to reform the professional development system of teachers (activity 2.1.39), establish teacher training centers (activity 2.1.40) and advance teachers’ ICT capacity (2.1.44).

The frequency of in-service training has been insufficient given the frequency of curriculum changes over the past 20 years. The Law on Education stipulates that all teachers must attend in-service training every five years and this is covered by public budget.¹⁴⁰ On average, 13.7% of the total teaching workforce receive training each year. The 1st year training content emphasizes the main responsibilities of the job, official documents and parent-teacher communications; 5th year focuses on developing teacher methods and technology to ensure child development; and 10th year seeks to enable teachers to exchange and share their experiences, support mutual learning and build skills to conduct experimental research and advise peer teachers.¹⁴¹ Specialized, on-request, and optional training is also available. The 2018 Teacher Development Support Law was approved by the Parliament of Mongolia. to support teacher development and strengthen the capacity of teachers. The law foresees spending 2% of kindergarten, school and TVET provider variable budgets on teacher development centers. Some reports highlight that there are inconsistencies with the provisions set out in the Law on Education and progress will have to be reviewed once the system is fully in place.¹⁴²

¹³² Primary and Secondary Education Sub-Sector Study Report. June 2019. Page 52.
¹³³ Primary and Secondary Education Sub-Sector Study Report. June 2019. Page 87
¹³⁴ Primary and Secondary Education Sub-Sector Study Report. June 2019. Page 84
¹³⁵ Primary and Secondary Education Sub-Sector Study Report. June 2019. Page 87
¹³⁶ Primary and Secondary Education Sub-Sector Study Report. June 2019. Page 46.

¹³⁷ Education in Mongolia: A Country Report. Ulaanbaatar, 2019.
¹³⁸ Primary and Secondary Education Sub-Sector Study Report. June 2019. Page 66
¹³⁹ Primary and Secondary Education Sub-Sector Study Report. June 2019. Page 69
¹⁴⁰ Law on Education, Article 40.8.
¹⁴¹ Primary and Secondary Education Sub-Sector Study Report. June 2019. Page 69.
¹⁴² Primary and Secondary Education Sub-Sector Study Report. June 2019. Page 45.

Teachers work beyond their contractual obligations with some subject teachers working more than others. Working hours for implementation of the curriculum at primary and secondary school is prescribed at 40 hours per week, of which 19 are course teaching hours and 6 are for non-teaching work. Results of a small survey found that the average time spent by a primary teacher per week is 62.4 hours. The study also suggests that some subject teachers are regularly teaching above the 19 hours per week, most notably: Mongolian language, music, technology for male students, fine art and health subjects. Of non-teaching working hours, most time (9.3 hours) are spent on exams and revisions of student notebooks.¹⁴³ Workload was highlighted as the main reason teachers did not take part in additional training.

3.3 Technical and Vocational Education and Training

The Law on Technical Vocational Education and Training defines the status, quality and scope of TVET institutions. As of 2018, 18.4% of total students within the sub-sector study technical education, 77% participate in vocational education programs, and the remaining 4% participate in professional training with a view to acquiring competency certificates.¹⁴⁴ The Assessment Center (established in 2016) carries out competency-based training assessment and quality assurance of the training institutions however its reach is limited. No research and development policy or system is currently in place to track progress and improve the sub-sector.

There is no national qualifications framework that considers the results of competency-based training in technical education, vocational education or vocational training.¹⁴⁵ A national qualification framework has not been created for the sub-sector, yet this framework is required if the TVET sector is to ensure it fits with the country’s current demands and features. Internal efficiency in the sub-sector is measured principally by the number of students that enroll, drop out or are expelled, and graduate. As highlighted in other sub-sectors, these indicators do not provide sufficient data on the reasons behind the drop-out figures that may not be related to quality (transfer, absent with special permission). Some reports suggest that the overwhelming majority of students (between 83-92%) leave this sub-sector through graduation, followed by transfers, misbehavior, poor performance, and leave of absence. According to some research, the number of students leaving courses after the third year is higher than the number leaving after year two however no further explanations are offered.¹⁴⁶

Mongolia is currently accrediting its TVET institutions on a voluntary basis. The National Center for Education Accreditation approved the Accreditation Criteria and Requirements of Vocational Education and Training Institutions in 2014 based on international standards and through the international Singapore-2 project.¹⁴⁷ Accreditation of the relatively complex activities of the sub-sector also seeks to improve the quality of activities. These standards were effective as of 2016 the process is currently being rolled out however accreditation is conducted on a voluntary basis.¹⁴⁸ Currently, ten VET institutions and 14 programs are in the stage of self-evaluation under new procedures.¹⁴⁹

The diversity of TVET institutions make sub-sector analysis challenging. The TVET sub-sector features various non-formal training institutions such as businesses, that offer short-term courses. There is currently no extensive short-term provider register and these courses are not required to confer qualifications. Since 2018, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection has started registering these short-term training providers with the aim of eventually imposing similar licensing requirements and identifying which courses could be funded through the Employment Promotion Fund. Some of the most proactive polytechnic colleges and Vocational Training and Production Centers are now in the stage of preparing themselves for ISO9901 and OHSAS18001 certifications.¹⁵⁰ Many though do not have systems or capacity to monitor outcomes of their training programs, or to provide career guidance to their students.

Results of theory and written exams are not enough to evaluate the quality of education in the TVET sub-sector given the strong focus on practical learning. The results of practical training are showcased when graduates present themselves to the labor market and the quality of the TVET sub-sector is reflected in the sensibility of the curriculum to the demands of the labor market.¹⁵¹ Reports by employers consistently highlight that soft skills and work attitudes are lacking among TVET graduates, most notably: collaborative problem solving, working in teams, effective communication, entrepreneurship. Increased partnerships between professional education institutions and the private sector may help make education programs more relevant to market demand.

Teachers in the sector do not meet standards and there is a lack of information on their qualifications. The TVET teachers’ professional level and skills are set by the Regulation on Vocational Education and Training Teaching Workers and the TVET Teacher Competency Level and Workload Determination. Statistical data shows that teachers’ qualifications and skills have not been identified in line with these procedures. There is no system in place to provide continuous professional development for teachers to ensure that their skills, knowledge and competencies are consistent with the needs of the labor market.¹⁵² Teaching workloads are set at 810 hours per year or 4-4.6 classroom hours daily. The rest of the working hours are for planning, preparing materials, studying new techniques, and developing capacities however there are no courses offered on teacher skills, methodology or professional skills.¹⁵³

Mongolia has adopted competency-based training reform at the policy level in the sub-sector, but no significant result has reached the implementation level, especially in preparing the units and divisions for reform. Competency-based approaches are outlined in the Law on TVET (2009) and seek to go promote holistic learning, going beyond technical skills, and equipping trainees with soft skills that are critical in the labor market such as attitude and behavior.¹⁵⁴ 70-80% of the content in TVET is practical and the remaining 20-30% is theoretical. Training curriculum and their contents are not in line with the labor market demand. Occupations prepared by the TVET institutions vary every year depending on the labor market demand.

¹⁴³ Primary Education Sector Analysis in Mongolia 2019. Page 37.
¹⁴⁴ Study report of Technical, Vocational, Educational and Training Sector 2019. Page 30.
¹⁴⁵ Study report of Technical, Vocational, Educational and Training Sector 2019. Page 82.
¹⁴⁶ Study report of Technical, Vocational, Educational and Training Sector 2019. Page 67.
¹⁴⁷ Study report of Technical, Vocational, Educational and Training Sector 2019. Page 74.
¹⁴⁸ Study report of Technical, Vocational, Educational and Training Sector 2019. Page 76.
¹⁴⁹ Study report of Technical, Vocational, Educational and Training Sector 2019. Page 84.

¹⁵⁰ Technical, Vocational, Educational and Training Policy Review Mongolia, 2019. Page 84.
¹⁵¹ Study report of Technical, Vocational, Educational and Training Sector 2019. Page 70.
¹⁵² Study report of Technical, Vocational, Educational and Training Sector 2019. Page 90.
¹⁵³ Study report of Technical, Vocational, Educational and Training Sector 2019. Page 71.
¹⁵⁴ Study report of Technical, Vocational, Educational and Training Sector 2019. Page 82.

Accreditation of curriculum in the sub-sector is challenging owing to the diversity of subjects taught.

Quality assurance is required for each TVET provider that is seeking accreditation and/or applying to offer recognized and verified courses. Accreditation Criteria for Training Curriculum as defined by the National Center of Education Accreditation include:

- Labor market analysis and compliance of curriculum
- Structure and contents of curriculum
- Preparation for curriculum implementation
- Curriculum implementation
- Curriculum evaluation and internal quality verification

There is underinvestment in learning resources in the TVET sub-sector. Curriculum quality is dependent on the quality of equipment, tools, textbook and training materials. Assessing the adequacy of TVET facilities, equipment, textbooks and training materials is difficult. This is due to the differentiation in the content of the school curriculum, its implementation, full day and accompanying training, and dual training.¹⁵⁵ One survey on textbooks conducted in TVET suggests a shortage of textbooks for general education programs being taught by TVET institutions, furthermore textbooks are outdated and are not following competency based training approaches.¹⁵⁶ TVET institutions are now able to earn, spend and report income, and credit hours of technical education which may enable them to purchase new resources using revenue.

3.4 Higher Education

Recent reforms in the higher education sub-sector aimed to create a universally accessible and higher quality system that ensures graduates meet the requirements of the labor market and are competitive on the world stage. The current reforms of the education system currently place a strong emphasis on supporting skill-based learning and student centric teaching. A number of reforms have been introduced to increase quality in institutions, curriculum and teaching standards however the lack of a national qualification framework at higher education level is a recurring obstacle according to source reports.

VISION 2050. HIGHER EDUCATION

2.1.9. Develop universities, technical colleges, vocational education centers as the local and regional human development centers, strengthen the open and flexible lifelong education system for everyone and all social sectors.

Monitoring results and quality assurance in the higher education sub-sector is not properly addressed in the current system. The methodology used to calculate internal efficiency in the higher education sub-sector largely considers factors such as the percentage of drop-outs, advancement to next year/ level, repeats, and number of graduates. These numbers are not easily generated given the number of private institutions and that the government does not fund per-student as for other sub-sectors. Based on data available, 89.3% of all students enrolled in higher education complete their education, and 10.7% dropout.¹⁵⁷ A missing aspect of education reform is the student evaluation system but there are no fully developed mechanisms in place according to source reports.¹⁵⁸

System

Accreditation is mandatory for higher education institutions under the Law on Higher Education and the process is underway. In order to improve quality and reduce the number of low-quality higher education institutions, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sport initiated accreditation in 2010. From 2016, all institutions must be accredited every five years by the National Council for Education Accreditation. As of 2019, 75% of all universities and colleges are accredited and 96% of all higher education students are attending accredited universities although some have not been reaccredited after the initial five years. 250 programs are accredited by NCEA and 90 programs from 18 institutions are internationally accredited, largely in the field of economics and business.¹⁵⁹

Mongolia has a high number of higher education institutions compared to other nations. Currently, there are 10 institutions with 100 or fewer students and 15 institutions with 200 or fewer. According to reports, these small and private institutions deliver a poor quality of education and have contributed to a negative image of higher education in Mongolia by offering low-quality courses that are not relevant for the labor market.¹⁶⁰

Mongolian universities are trying to improve quality to meet international standards and become accredited. The program reforms implemented in 2014 by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sport have started the process of creating flexible programs based on the skills, knowledge, and abilities gained by graduation. The evaluation of quality, and continuous improvement are lagging behind according to reports. The number of 2+2 and 3+1 programs between Mongolian higher education institutions and their international partners have increased in recent years. International development partners and development agencies from countries like Germany are working to promote exchange programs, support research and study, industrial internships etc. to bring standards up to international standards.¹⁶¹ The Government of Mongolia has also sought to support the establishment of branches of international higher education institutions in the country to increase the quality of the home system. Under activity 2.1.30 of the 2050 Vision, the government of Mongolia is seeking to ramp-up efforts in these areas to increase the presence of foreign universities and quality assurance measures are considered in activity 2.1.36.

The professional development of teachers in higher education institutions is almost exclusively addressed by the institution itself. The job description of professors and teachers in the higher education sub-sector is shifting from a teacher-centric approach to focus on student learning reflecting a shift in teaching approaches. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sport has taken a more active role in outlining a policy on the professional development, training, and social security of teachers however the sub-sector institutions have established centers for teacher development at each of their institutions to increase quality. Each higher education institution certifies its teachers and staff. The 2050 Vision seeks to build on the achievements of the sub-sector in this regard to create teacher training centers under activity 2.1.40.

Attracting qualified and talented staff to the higher education sub-sector is a challenge. Teaching remuneration is low which does not attract top candidates. A legal environment has been created to reward teachers by selecting and awarding exemplary teachers in the higher education sub-sector. There is a need to attract Mongolians who have studied abroad to teaching positions in higher education. In 2018-2019, 12,633 people were employed in the higher education sub-sector and 64.7% are working for state-owned higher education institutions. Of all the full-time teachers, 60% are female which is the opposite to global averages.¹⁶² A common complaint by staff is that managers lack leadership and management skills.

¹⁵⁵ Study report of Technical, Vocational, Educational and Training Sector 2019. Page 73.
¹⁵⁶ Study report of Technical, Vocational, Educational and Training Sector 2019. Page 93.
¹⁵⁷ Higher Education Sub-sector. Page 10.
¹⁵⁸ Higher Education Sub-sector. Page 40

¹⁵⁹ Higher Education Sub-sector. Page 45.
¹⁶⁰ Higher Education Sub-sector. Page 13.
¹⁶¹ Higher Education Sub-sector. Page 19.
¹⁶² Higher Education Sub-sector. Page 34.

3.5 Life-long learning

Given the diversity of courses (formal and non-formal), range of teaching contexts and the ability ranges of students studying in the sub-sector, issues around quality are challenging to address. Consistent underfunding in the sub-sector also means the mechanisms and human resources are not in place to conduct exhaustive analysis. Reports highlight that the sub-sector lacks regulation, resources and professionalism however suggests that standards are on par or higher than in many Asia-Pacific countries.¹⁶³

Evaluation of students in formal secondary school equivalency programs is limited to having them sit the graduation exams and there is no system for quality assurance. Beyond those learners who can sit exams in regular schools, evaluation is assessed by whether the trainee has studied through the curriculum and advanced to the next class. Non-formal lifelong learning programs may offer token certificates however reports do not indicate a specific policy on assessing outcomes beyond participation. Trainers adapt learning to the needs of the learner based on their observations.¹⁶⁴ For learners of short-term or informal programs, the objective is often to return to learning and statistics on enrollment, advancement and drop-out are used as indicators. Reports suggest that in order to improve service quality, there is a need to focus on training environment, service accessibility and human resource capacity.¹⁶⁵

Non-formal education offers students a competency-based approach to learning through which they can choose based on need. These learning opportunities may be based on community organizations in the type of course, day class, clubs or training centers. In the era of ICT developed society, open and online training and learning opportunities are also new types of non-formal learning opportunities. Training materials are focused on providing competency-based and capacity-building capabilities so that knowledge and capacity application levels are improved. The flexible approach allows students to obtain theoretical knowledge but also use the knowledge in real life.¹⁶⁶

Formal life-long learning offers a path for re-entry into education for those who have dropped out however new courses are required if the sub-sector is to meet labor market needs. There is an insufficient budget to develop new courses or purchase tools and resources that could be needed for an expanded curriculum.¹⁶⁷ A new curriculum was proposed spanning five areas of life-long education however the new approach was not approved by the sub-sector’s governing bodies. Consequently, the 2010 curriculum is still being used.¹⁶⁸ Even within the 2010 curriculum, a lack of professional knowledge and capacity among teaching staff means that very few of the classes on specific topics are being taught.

Life-long learning centers struggle to meet the learning needs of different age groups and different target groups owing to a shortage of resources. Resources are reported to be scarce with 1-2 resources between 15-25 learners¹⁶⁹ although supply of new training material and manuals for equivalency programs has reportedly improved. As of 2018, 200 national books, manuals and training materials are used in life-long learning centers. Resources are also outdated, with most having been developed between 2001 and 2003. Seven sets of textbooks are available to support teaching. As in other sectors, there is a shortage of IT facilities in life-long centers and in services operating out of other premises. As

¹⁶³ Sub-Sector Study Report on Life-long Education 2019. Page 69.
¹⁶⁴ Sub-Sector Study Report on Life-long Education 2019. Page 13.
¹⁶⁵ Sub-Sector Study Report on Life-long Education 2019. Page 57.
¹⁶⁶ Sub-Sector Study Report on Life-long Education 2019. Page 69.
¹⁶⁷ Sub-Sector Study Report on Life-long Education 2019. Page 10.
¹⁶⁸ Sub-Sector Study Report on Life-long Education 2019. Page 59.
¹⁶⁹ Sub-Sector Study Report on Life-long Education 2019. Page 61.

of 2018, 354 centers use 208 laptops and 239 computer desktops with printers, screens, projectors and sewing machines all in short supply. Bigger equipment such as machinery for leather wool crafting and cooking is not available.¹⁷⁰ A major challenge for those providing life-long learning outside the life-long education centers is that premises are not suitable. Around 90% of life-long education centers do not own any physical premises. For the majority life-long service providers, the premises from which they operate are often inadequate and unequipped to the type of learning offered.¹⁷¹

Class sizes for equivalency programs in life-long education services are smaller than in regular schools however they are still overcrowded. Class sizes for equivalency services in general education programs in rural areas are 15-20 students per class, and 20-25 in urban areas.¹⁷² The regulation for equivalency training states that classroom training should be delivered to no more than 15 students. Although these numbers may seem lower than in schools, there is often a mix of students with different levels of education, age, and abilities. Teachers must deliver unique methodologies to match the capabilities of each student.

A lack of professional development opportunities for teachers is a challenge across all life-long learning services. Reporting indicates that providing alternative education programs in particular have limited access to in-job training to stay up-to-date on the curriculum. Teachers in the life-long learning centers receive training on the 1st, 5th and 10th year of service as teachers in regular schools however the profiles of their students are often challenging. Additional training is provided by the National Center for Life-long Education. In total, 2,402 teachers were trained in life-long education Basic programs, Equivalency Programs, Equalization and Human Resource Capacity Building between 2014-2018.¹⁷³ Staff turnover is high in the sub-sector as many teachers consider it a temporary position before entering regular schools. As of 2018, 67% of the 630 people working in the life-long education sector have been there for 1-5 years, 20% for 6-10 years, and only 9% for more than 11 years, with the remaining being newly recruited.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰ Sub-Sector Study Report on Life-long Education 2019. Page 63.
¹⁷¹ Sub-Sector Study Report on Life-long Education 2019. Page 10.
¹⁷² Sub-Sector Study Report on Life-long Education 2019. Page 68.
¹⁷³ Sub-Sector Study Report on Life-long Education 2019. Page 59.
¹⁷⁴ Sub-Sector Study Report on Life-long Education 2019. Page 58.



EDUCATION COST AND FINANCE

- 4.1 Education budget structure
- 4.2 Revenue and Expenditure
- 4.3 Sub-sector characteristics

4. EDUCATION COST AND FINANCE

Mongolia has seen three phases of state budget and financial policy reform as the country has shifted to a market economy-1990-2000, 2000-2012, 2013-present. The findings presented herein focus on the evolution since 2010 and in particular since 2013 when the education budget moved towards an input-based budget for recurring costs, and a program-based approach for investment. Overall, it should be noted that the geography of Mongolia with its vast territories and sparsely populated regions combined with its young population and winter climate that requires considerable heating, means that the sector has a high level of operational costs. Within the national context, the sector also has a large public sector workforce and thus high wage/salary capacity compared to other sectors, again owing to the number of children in education.¹⁷⁵

VISION 2050. HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

- 2.1.4. Strengthen the funding mechanisms of the educational institutions and utilize them for improving the learning environment where everyone would learn successfully.
- 2.1.12. Improve the infrastructures required for educational institutions at all levels, create an equitable and accessible educational environment that meets the standards and quality requirements.
- 2.1.14. Set the mechanism, where, the estimated average daily dietary intake of essential nutrients, vitamins, and minerals of children aged 1 to 3 and 4 to 6 years at kindergartens updated annual basis, in case of the allocated fund is not sufficient enough to meet the daily nutritional requirements of children, mobilize additional funds from parents and legitimate guardians of children.
- 2.1.19. Create an enabling environment for educational institutions as per required standards by improving the school dormitory, green development facilities, sports and art halls, canteen, and information technology classrooms following the specific rules, provide an accessible learning environment for those students with disabilities, and make the child and user-friendly, safe water, toilet, hygiene facilities available in schools.
- 2.1.36. Renew the workload standards for teachers of kindergartens and general education institutions taking into account their duties, responsibilities, and workplace, make the standards more flexible, introduce the performance-based assessment of teachers’ work, improve the pay and reward system for teachers, and gradually improve the real salary of teachers ensuring that teacher’s salaries to be among the top 10% of the national average salary scale.
- 3.1.16. Enable support system targeting primary school age children of poor families by creating a fund of primary education textbooks, providing services for textbook leasing and rotational use of textbooks, offering discounts on school uniforms and ensuring that the state can bear a certain portion of living costs in dormitories and travel expenses.
- 9.1.1. To ensure accessibility of pre-school education to young children, increase the number of kindergarten facilities and child beds gradually following the demand and supply, keep the class size at required standards.

¹⁷⁵ Education, Finance and Investment, 2019. Page 31.

4.1 Education budget structure

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sport manages the education recurrent and capital/ investment budget. Recurring costs follow an input-based model that calculates average expenditure based on the number of students and the average normative variable costs. This per-student calculation is allocated to local governments based on the number of students and some other geographical considerations. As specified in the Law on Education, both state and non-governmental educational institutions are eligible for state funding based on the per-student funding model. When the number of pupils is factored into the analysis, education spending favors the early childhood education sub-sector, which received above the 10% international benchmark. Investment is financed through a program-based approach (detailed below).

FIGURE 21. Education expenses per person, nominal and real prices. Source: Education Finance and Investment 2019.

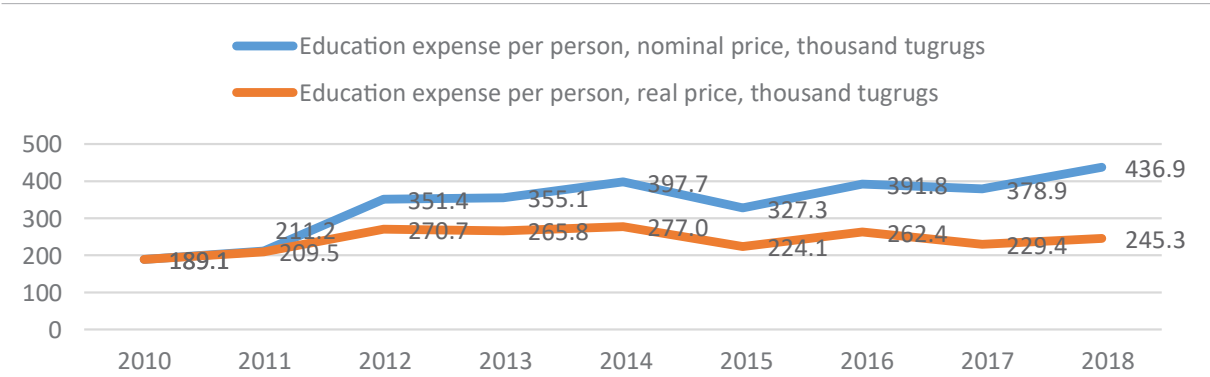
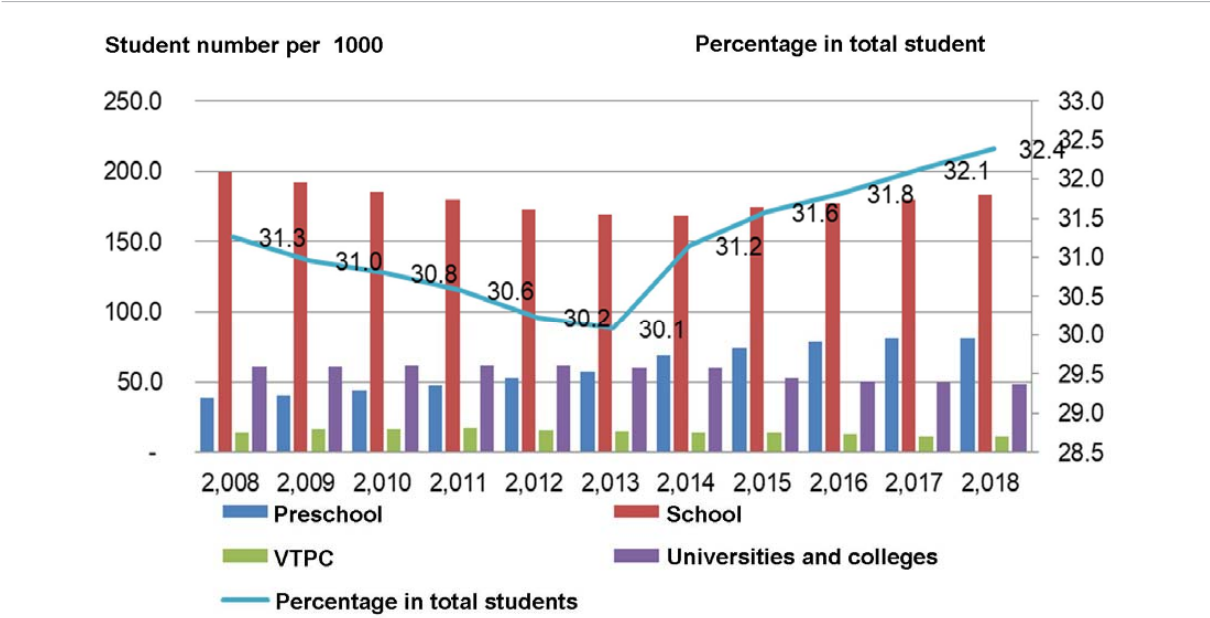


FIGURE 22. Student numbers by sub-sector. Source: Education Finance and Investment 2019



Disbursement of funds is efficient and transparent but local governments have little or no margin to plan or budget according to context-specific needs. In 2018, 64% of the total education expenditure on general education was disbursed to local governments for final disbursement to schools. Reports suggest schools receive resources on time and as per the budget plan, and information is accurately accounted for, audited, and made publicly available. This is a significant achievement in public financial management however it does not allow local governments any choice as to where to allocate resources beyond the number of students, i.e. invest more in weaker schools or respond to unanticipated changes in demand. At the school level, the system leaves almost no scope for managers to plan for circumstance-specific characteristics of their school. While there is a system in place to apply for reallocation of funds across budget lines, according to reports the process is cumbersome.¹⁷⁶

The preparation of budgets for the general education sub-sector is managed by two departments within the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sport. Reports suggest there is little coordination between one branch that works on recurrent cost budgeting, and the other that works on capital investment (buildings, dormitories, sports halls). As such, there is a lack of medium or long-term vision and funding of certain material such as furniture and routine maintenance is ineffectively spread over both budgets.¹⁷⁷

FIGURE 23. Capital investment projects by sub-sectors 2010-2018. Source: Education, Finance and Investment Review.

Sector, classification	Percentage	Amount /mil.tug/
School buildings	26.5%	327,203.0
Dormitories	10.4%	52,860.2
Sport halls	9.9%	34,197.0
Preschools	49.8%	197,811.8
School, pre-school complex	1.5%	20,000.0
Universities and colleges	1.9%	25,432.7
EDUCATION SECTOR	100%	657,504.7

Around 85% of all spending between 2014 and 2018 was on recurring costs, with the remaining 15% on capital expenditure.¹⁷⁸ In the capital expenditure line, around 80% was spent on new construction indicating severe underinvestment in existing facilities, repairs, and expansion. Capital investment is not guided by any comprehensive investment policy or plan at the sector or sub-sector level but follows a program approach through which each sub-sector defines its programs, objectives, and targets to request funding. Critical data such as the coefficient for state-owned schools, is often not taken into account when investment decisions are made according to reports.¹⁷⁹ Under the 2050 Vision, the government has put additional emphasis on decision-making based on facts and data (activity 2.1.1). Although it is not explicitly mentioned, such an approach could stand to benefit capital investment in the education sector.

FIGURE 24. Recurrent vs capital expenditure over the past decade. Source: Education Finance and Investment 2019

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Recurrent expenditure	87.4	88.3	83.5	79.3	82.6	88.8	78.1	92.8	78.7	85.1	81.2
Capital expenditure	12.6	11.7	16.5	20.7	17.4	11.2	21.9	7.2	21.3	14.9	18.8
Total expenditure and net loan amount	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Human resources are the largest and fastest growing expenditure in the education budget yet the sector’s personnel earn less than national averages. Wage expenditure grew by an average of 21% per year between 2005 and 2016 and was the fastest growing recurrent expense category in this period.¹⁸⁰

Only 1% is spent on learning materials. Expensive equipment, such as computers, are favored over lower-cost equipment and resources like books. Interviews conducted in one report with representatives from the Ministry of Education and Culture and Science suggested the investment in IT equipment is intended to improve the learning environment and this is consistent with reporting on school and kindergarten resources (see Chapter 3. Efficiency and Quality).¹⁸¹ This would align with activity set out in the 2050 Action to promote ICT skills among teachers (activity 2.1.33).

4.2 Revenue and Expenditure

Using macroeconomic indicators, it is possible to estimate the expenditure of the sector in relation to economic growth in the country and identify trends in the investment in education. Due to the shift to a 12-year cycle, the relatively recent introduction of a digitalized national data system, and the complexity of certain sub-sectors with regards to financial reporting, notably in tertiary education, there are variations in the source reports on finance.

Expenditure in the education sector is aligned with high-income countries. Mongolia currently spends between 15-20% of the annual government expenditure on education, with the figure for 2018 sitting at 15.3%. The share of the Education Sector Budget of GDP has averaged 5.39% over the past 10 years suggesting that spending on education is slightly above global averages-4-5%. The GDP percentage is however on a downward slope as GDP at current prices increased 1.49 times between 2010 and 2018, yet the education budget only increased 1.39 times.¹⁸² GDP growth will likely slowdown in the coming year according to the Ministry of Finance and International Monetary Fund meaning that less funds may be available.¹⁸³

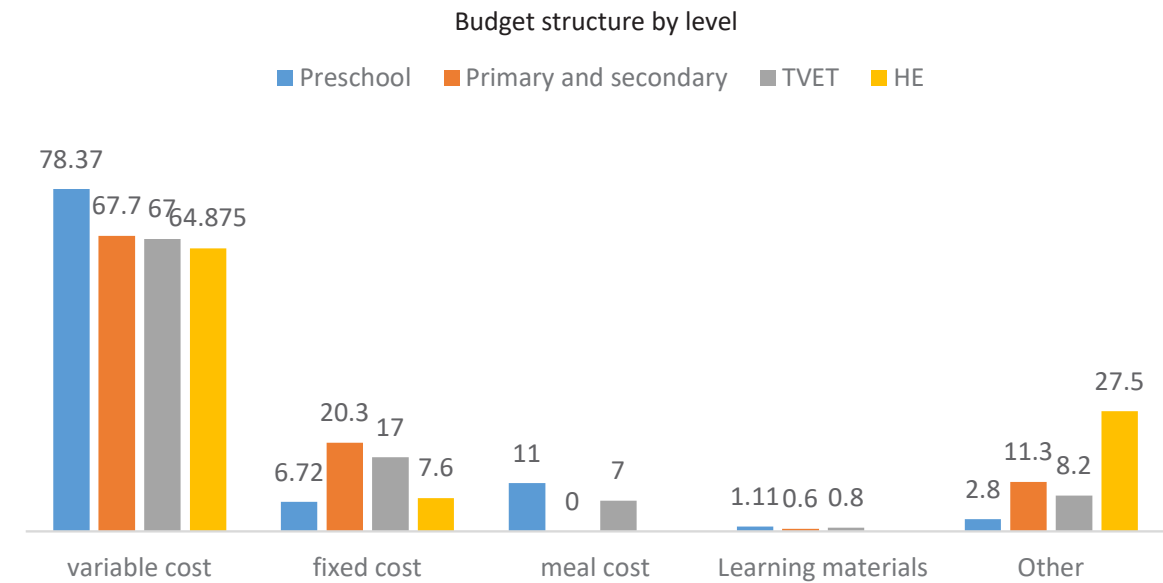
¹⁷⁶ Mongolia: Public Expenditure Review, 2019. Page 110.
¹⁷⁷ Mongolia: Public Expenditure Review, 2019. Page 116.
¹⁷⁸ Education Finance and Investment, 2019. Page 8.
¹⁷⁹ Education, Finance and Investment Review. Page 12.

¹⁸⁰ Mongolia: Public Expenditure Review, 2019. Page 108.
¹⁸¹ Mongolia: Public Expenditure Review, 2019. Page 111.
¹⁸² Education, Finance and Investment, 2019. Page 5
¹⁸³ IMF Country Report No. 19/297

FIGURE 25. Average state expenditure in sample countries. Education Finance and Investment, 2019.

Country	State expenditure/ GDP	State expenditure on education (by state budget percentage)	Percentage of per student expenditure per capita GDP
Bulgaria	4.1	10.77	24.94
Czech Republic	4.24	9.67	24.37
Hungary	4.85	9.82	21.62
Japan	3.78	9.51	24.32
USA	5.62	14.71	25.3
Mongolia (average over past 10 years)	5.39	14.7	18.1

FIGURE 26. Expenditure of recurring costs by sub-sector by cost 2018.

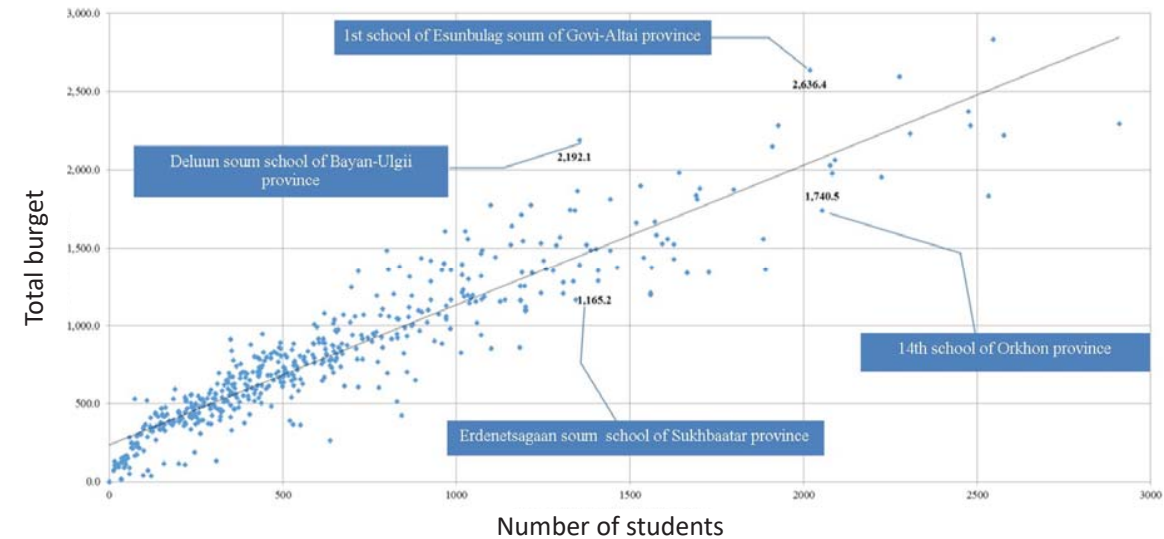


In addition to the state budget, the education sector has leveraged funding through international development projects and the private sector. Figures from 1997-2012 suggest that a total of 102.9 million USD was leveraged from these actors across the entire sector.¹⁸⁴ Figures are likely to be underestimated as contributions in the sector as grants, loans, and contributions from institutes, local governments and development partners may not be fully reported. Under activity 2.1.4 of the 2050 Vision, the government is seeking to strengthen funding mechanisms to increase access. It is not specified if these efforts entail increased participation of the private sector or other measures.

One of the main challenges facing the sector is the high cost of delivering quality education in remote locations. While 51.7% of all soum have up to 3,000 citizens, 30.1% have between 3,000-5,000, 8.5% have between 5,000-7,000 and only 9.7 % have over 7,000.¹⁸⁵ The actual number of children being taught in rural areas is therefore relatively low but labor costs per child are high. The sector does not benefit from economies of scale but, on the contrary, expansion of services increases cost per child (see Chapter 2. Efficiency and Quality).

There are major inequalities and a lack of efficiency within the state investment model for early childhood and general education. Despite the allowance per child investment by the state to cover variable costs, when the total investment from the state is taken into account and divided by the number of students, there are major inconsistencies. The graph below illustrates that the Deluun Soum school (top left) and Erdenetsagaan soum (bottom left) have the same student population but a budget of 1,165.2 million MNT vs 2,192.1 million MNT respectively. Similarly, the difference for 1st School of Esunbulag soum (top right) and 14th schools of Orkhon (bottom right) are 2,636.4 million MNT and 1,740.5 million MNT. Schools in aimag centers and districts of Ulaanbaatar are the most cost-effective schools in terms of per child cost.¹⁸⁶

FIGURE 27. Mapped budgets of general education schools by number of students.



Parents and families contribute to the revenue of schools and kindergartens through voluntary contributions but the total amount is difficult to estimate. These contributions are to support the upgrading of classrooms and the purchasing of new resources such as toys. Contributions are generally made at the beginning of the year and reports suggest that although these contributions are voluntary, social pressure may mean that they are all but compulsory. Although contributions are legally allowed and should be deposited in the institution's bank account, many are not declared or are received in goods. The limited data on this practice suggests that contributions are higher in urban areas and negligible in rural bagh schools.¹⁸⁷ In the case of kindergartens, there are also suggestions that such contributions may support parents secure places through the lottery-allocated spaces.

¹⁸⁴ Education, Finance and Investment, 2019. Page 32.

¹⁸⁵ Education Sector Medium-term Development Plan. Page 18.

¹⁸⁶ Education, Finance and Investment, 2019. Page 38.

¹⁸⁷ Mongolia: Public Expenditure Review, 2019. Page 116.

4.3 Sub-sector characteristics

Of the total education sector budget, 46% is spent on general education schools, 23% on early childhood education, 9% on higher education, 4% on TVET, and 18% on education sector management.¹⁸⁸

Early Childhood Education

One-quarter of the education budget is allocated to pre-school education and most is spent on human resources. Over the past decade, the country spent 0.9% of GDP on pre-school education, which is well above world standards.¹⁸⁹ In real terms, estimates published by the Ministry of Economic Development in 2014 suggested that close to 8 million USD had been invested in the sub-sector since 2005. The private sector held only 14% of all kindergarten enrollments in 2017.¹⁹⁰

Human resources are the highest variable cost in the sub-sector, accounting for approximately 61% of total recurrent expenditure - 41% on teacher wages, 28% on non-teaching staff. The expenditure distributions raise concerns on a number of issues:

- **41% on wages, salaries and bonuses of teachers:** a supplement of 10% on the base teacher was added in soum areas, and 8% in aimag centers.¹⁹¹ These measures are part of government efforts to attract teachers to rural areas. While this is not explicitly mentioned in the 2050 Vision, one of the key priority areas is Regional Development.
- **28% on costs associated with learning conditions (non-teaching staff):** Spending reporting in public and private kindergartens reveal a considerably higher number of non-teaching staff in the public sphere. The share of non-teaching staff in the total budget in 2018-2019 was higher in public kindergartens and the percentage of all staff that are non-teaching was 41%, compared to 28% in the private sector.¹⁹² Reports highlight that there is no standard policy on the number of non-teaching staff in kindergartens meaning this figure can vary significantly however rural kindergartens generally employ more non-teaching staff.¹⁹³
- **12% on nutrition:** Since the government took over covering meal cost in kindergarten in 2008, the expenditure is crowding out other quality inputs in ECE and as well it does not cover all the needs. As kindergarten provision expanded and continues to expand including through alternative services, there is to better target the intervention. The 2050 vision sets out measures to ensure that children reach their daily dietary intake (activity 2.1.15) and suggests that where state funding is not available to achieve this, parent funding will be mobilized.
- **7% on fixed expenses related to office buildings;** As noted, heating over the long winter months represents a significant expense.
- **3% on goods and service;** As discussed, some goods fall under the capital investment budget whereas others are considered recurring costs. Soum kindergartens have lower service costs owing to lower market prices.¹⁹⁴
- **2% on classroom learning material (<0.5% in alternative ECE services):** as previously mentioned, many kindergartens rely on ‘voluntary’ support from parents and local budgets for material. While

¹⁸⁸ Education, Finance and Investment Review. Page 22.
¹⁸⁹ Education, Finance and Investment Review. Page 21.
¹⁹⁰ Mongolia: Public Expenditure Review. Page 111.
¹⁹¹ Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis 2019. Page 41.
¹⁹² Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis 2019. Page 73.
¹⁹³ Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis 2019. Page 74.
¹⁹⁴ Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis 2019. Page 74.

data on these contributions is limited, there is a concern that kindergartens in affluent areas will be better resourced.¹⁹⁵ Expenditure on classroom learning materials was 11 times less in public kindergartens compared to private kindergartens.¹⁹⁶

- **1% on routine maintenance;** As discussed, there is a lack of investment in maintenance of buildings partly owing to a lack of coordination between departments in the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sport. Major repairs are often budgeted in capital investment.

The average income of a kindergarten worker is below the national average.¹⁹⁷ The Government of Mongolia has been increasing the salary of civil servants periodically since 2008, nevertheless, education sector wages have not kept pace with inflation and teachers in kindergarten remain underpaid compared to national averages.¹⁹⁸

Capital investment by the state across the regions of Mongolia is not even. Reports suggest that the Bayan Ulgii region, where 90% of the country’s ethnic minority Kazakh population reside, has had the least capital investment compared to other regions (see Chapter 2. Equity). Efficiency and quality data indicate that school readiness in that region is low, with Kazakh children being at 59% compared to 80% for children of Khalkha-headed households in the same region.¹⁹⁹ While other factors may account for this discrepancy, (see Chapter 3. Efficiency and Quality), the government has not sought to invest in kindergarten facilities to improve the situation.

The current financing system of early childhood education does not cater to children with disabilities, additional learning needs or talented children. Like general education budgeting, funding for kindergartens is based on a per-child allowance to cover recurrent costs with little consideration of students’ real needs. The Law on Pre-primary Education (article 9.15) does state that a teacher is entitled to additional salary based on the number of disabled children and characteristics of job but reports highlight that no budgetary mechanisms have been put in place.²⁰⁰ The additional attention given to children with disabilities in the 2050 Vision may result in additional funding being allocated to learners with disabilities.

General Education

In 2018, Mongolia spent 46% of its total education budget on general education, above the 30-34% global average. Mongolia’s progress in expanding coverage of basic education services is underpinned by its sustained investment. The sub-sector is dominated by state funding (around 98%) however family contributions, international organization projects, grants, and programs may not always be included in official figures.

FIGURE 28. Funding for general education schools. Education Finance and Investment Review

SOURCE	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
From state budget	98.8	98.6	98.4	98.5	98.4
From school’s own operation	1.2	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.6

¹⁹⁵ Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis 2019. Page 72
¹⁹⁶ Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis 2019. Page 73
¹⁹⁷ Education Finance and Investment Review. Page 25
¹⁹⁸ Education Finance and Investment Review. Page 25
¹⁹⁹ Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis 2019. Page 59.
²⁰⁰ Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis 2019. Page 41.

Over the past decade, approximately 85% of the total budget is recurrent expenditure and around 15% is investment capital.²⁰¹ Recurrent expenditure is mainly attributed to salary and social insurance of staff while capital investment has supported the construction of new schools. Despite the large capital investment in building new schools, low and declining routine maintenance budgets are likely to create problems in the coming years and there is a critical need to optimize the value achieved from large investments through adequate maintenance of school infrastructure of buildings, furniture and equipment.²⁰²

Successful PFM reforms have led to increased execution of education expenditure by local government, however there is limited decision-making space for local government and school managers. At the school level school managers have no space to plan and budget for their specific school needs. Drawing from the four rounds of school grants which were disbursed under EQRP, school level planning leads to tangible results.

According to demographic projections, the number of pupils in the general education schools by the year 2030 is expected to increase by 39% from the current level. Such demographic shifts will bring financial challenges to the sub-sector, most notably: In the next 4 years, the general education school buildings need to be increased by 15%, which requires 38.7 billion MNTs.²⁰³ The State budget currently allocates approximately 1 billion MNTs annually to expand the school building.²⁰⁴

General education is dominated by public schools. The public sector absorbs most Mongolian pupils, especially in pre-primary and general education. The share of students in private schools is only 6% of all enrollments in the country whereas targets of 10% were set in previously policy recommendations.²⁰⁵

Technical and Vocational Education and Training

Financing of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions is dominated by state budget funding, while revenue generated by the institutions is around 5%. Financing of the state TVET sector in Mongolia comes from four different sources: (1) public funds from the national budget; (2) foreign worker levy from the private sector; (c) international development assistance from major multilateral organizations and bilateral development agencies and (d) funding from large private corporations.²⁰⁶ Over the past decade, the sub-sector share in GDP has fallen to less than 1% from its highest of 6.3% in 2008. The sub-sector has however been able to increase revenue from its own operations. Operating costs and investment expenses of the 51 state-owned enterprises are partially covered by the state whereas only variable costs are covered by the state in the 35 non-state organizations.

FIGURE 29. TVET school financial resource structure by percentage, 2010-2017

Source	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2016	2017
State budget	95.7	94.2	96.2	96.5	57.9	95.8	95.4
Revenue from the organization’s own operations	4.3	5.8	3.8	3.5	42.1	4.2	4.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

²⁰¹ Mongolia: Public Expenditure Review, 2019. Page 113.

²⁰² Mongolia: Public Expenditure Review, 2019. Page 113.

²⁰³ Education Finance and Investment Review. Page 42.

²⁰⁴ Education Finance and Investment Review. Page 42.

²⁰⁵ Mongolia: Public Expenditure Review, 2019. Page 113. Page 111

²⁰⁶ Education Finance and Investment Review. Mongolia. Page 52.

Between 82-94% of the recurrent cost of the TVET sector are variable cost and 6-18% are fixed costs. The majority of variable costs are salaries of the employees and the social insurance charges. The next highest variable costs were outsourcing, procurement of other goods and services, and manufacturing costs. Reports indicate a lack of transparency in this sub-sector’s financial information with limited information available. Financial reporting is inconsistent across reports, this may be because of a weak governance structure (see Chapter 6. Governance).²⁰⁷ Reports suggest that the sub-sector requires considerable investment and budget financing to develop.²⁰⁸

The Employment Promotion Fund (EPF) is a key vehicle supporting the TVET sub-sector by paying stipends to students. The EPF raises over half its funding through the Foreign Worker Levy and transfers 23% to the TVET Promotion Fund. The TVET Promotion Fund then uses these funds to pay student stipends and also cover some variable costs to TVET schools.²⁰⁹

Higher education

Private spending on higher education is high and 92% of the revenue generated by public universities comes from student tuition fees. State-owned universities, institutes and colleges are funded through tuition fees, state budget funds, loans, project funding for research and development, income from business activities, and donations that are approved by the relevant state body. The vast majority of the total expenditure of the universities is the cost of wages. These costs are primarily funded by tuition fees.²¹⁰ Expenditures for demand-side financing offered at the higher education level declined in recent years. Demand-side financing data were available for 2015 and onward. The decline from MNT 78.4 trillion to MNT 43.5 trillion between 2015 and 2018 represented 8% and 3% of the recurrent spending by the government on education in these years.²¹¹

Lifelong learning

Most state funding for the sub-sector is provided to the National Center for Lifelong Education for its coordination role, with international funding covering operations. The state budget is spent on fixed and variable costs of the NCLE and the center does not provide operating expenses, such as training materials for teaching. The development of human resources capacity and the production of handbooks, textbooks, audio and video materials is done through projects and programs supported by international organizations. Many of the services provided to monk children, herder children and other vulnerable groups were funded through grants from international organizations such as UNESCO. The source reports highlight that this situation is unsustainable.

The life-long learning sub-sector is not sufficiently funded. As highlighted in Chapter 3. Efficiency and Quality, funding or resources and learning materials is insufficient. Less than 0.5% of the total budget for education is allocated to life-long learning. Of the 354 lifelong education centers providing services, 90% do not own any building or premises. Most lack sufficient training tools and materials to meet local requirements and context (sewing machinery, kitchen utilities etc.).

²⁰⁷ Education Finance and Investment Review. Page 50.

²⁰⁸ Study report of Technical, Vocational, Educational and Training Sector 2019. Page 98.

²⁰⁹ Education in Mongolia: A Country Report Mongolia. Page 146

²¹⁰ Education Finance and Investment Review. Page 67.

²¹¹ Mongolia: Public Expenditure Review, 2019. Page 111.

Despite provisions in the Law on Education, budget management of lifelong learning has not been decentralized. According to Article 39.6 of the Law on Education, expenses for evening, correspondence and non-formal elementary, basic and general education shall be financed from state and local budgets. In reality, spending on non-formal education services has not been formalized in local budgets leading to limited margin for local governments to support the sub-sector.

Life-long learning base teacher salaries are generally aligned with those of secondary school teachers but there are fewer or no incentives such as exam marking or bonuses. This may be one of the reasons for the high staff turnover (discussed in Chapter 3. Efficiency and Quality).²¹²

²¹² Sub-Sector Study Report on Life-long Education 2019. Page 57.



EXTERNAL EFFICIENCY

5.1	Labor Market
5.2	Education relevance to labor market
5.3	Education returns

5. EXTERNAL EFFICIENCY

Ensuring graduates have the right skills to confidently enter the labor market will support Mongolia to exploit the benefits of investment in education and accelerate economic growth. If those leaving the education sector and entering the workforce have the adequate skills to innovate and meet international standards, the country will be able to diversify and globally compete through strengthening existing economic sectors and expanding into new areas. This chapter draws on labor market studies, graduate statistics and insights from policies and initiatives on external efficiency, as well as highlighting mechanisms that are in place to guide students preparing for entrance into the job market.

VISION 2050: HUMAN DEVELOPMENT.

- 2.1.5. Establish the research and innovation support units within the professional education institutions and strengthen the partnerships between employers, professional associations, academia, and researchers.
- 2.1.10. Set up a system, where the universities, technical colleges, and vocational education centers be responsible for supporting and continuously updating professional knowledge and skills of their graduates by increasing the accessibility and availability of lifelong learning services, by encouraging multi-sectoral partnerships to develop and implement the training programs for life skills training for adults, new skills building, and skills upgrading and mastery.
- 2.1.29. Revise the classifications of training programs offered by the universities, and vocational and professional technical education institutions in line with the admission policies and labor force forecasts.
- 2.2.30. Develop vocational, technical and tertiary education institutions per international standards linking with the regional specific needs and the economic priorities, conduct studies on employment status of the graduates, and employers' satisfaction on their employees' performance, improve the training programs, strengthen the partnerships, and allocate at least 20 hours of training programs to the internship programs.
- 2.3.10. Create and develop the Student Labor Exchange to facilitate the employment of students.
- 2.6.9. Strengthen the systems that define a national qualifications' framework and balance the supply and demand for the labor market.

5.1 Labor Market

The labor force participation in Mongolia is aligned with the global average. As of 2018, 70% of the population-1.36 million people-are of working age. Around 35.7% of the total population are employed and the country has a labor force participation rate of 60.1%. The number of employers has increased by 39.6% to about 8,000 from the previous 2017 however the number of self-employed decreased.

FIGURE 30. Dynamic changes in population employment indicators. Source: Sub-Sector Study Report on Life-long Education 2019

Indicators	2000	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Population of labor age	1,347	1,798	1,812	1,937	1,941	2,023	2,107	2,220	2,227
Economically active population	848	1,125	1,151	1,198	1,207	1,244	1,276	1,357	1,358
Out of this: Employed	809.0	1,038	1,056	1,103.6	1,111	1,151	1,147.8	1,238	1,253
Registered unemployed population	38.6	57.1	35.7	42.7	36.9	32.7	34.4	25.4	24.9
Labor Force participation rate %	62.9	62.5	63.5	61.9	62.1	61.5	60.5	61.1	61.0
Employment rate %	60.0	57.7	58.3	57.0	57.2	56.9	54.5	55.8	56.3
Unemployment rate %	4.6	7.7	8.2	7.9	7.9	7.5	10.0	8.8	7.8

Most companies in Mongolia are small, employing less than 9 people. There are 69.5 thousand active companies and employers in Mongolia and 83.6% employ 1-9 people, 12.8% employ 10-49 people, and 3.5% employ 50 or more people. Of the graduates, 49.4% work for businesses with up to 50 employees and 22.0% work for enterprises with more than 251 employees. Many employers hire foreign skilled workers to meet demands that cannot be met domestically.²¹³

Unemployment is slightly above the global average and is on an upward trend, with women more affected. As of 2018, unemployment rates were at 7.8% after a general upward trend since 2010. More than 30% of 15-34-year-old youth are employed in the non-formal sector. Around 80% of people with disabilities are economically inactive. The unemployment rate among women is 8.3 whereas it stands at 7.1 for men. The number of unpaid family workers increased by 8,718 or 18.8% between 2010 and 2018. 63% of job seekers have been looking for a job for more than a year, and over 40% of them for more than three years. The majority of unpaid workers are women and the earnings of young women is 1.4 times lower than young men.

FIGURE 31. Employment status of the population aged above 15 by gender, 2018.
Source: Study report of Technical, Vocational, Educational and Training Sector 2019

Indicator	Female	Male	Total
Total population	1,615,529	1,562,370	3,177,899
Population above the age of 15	1,051,276	1,175,320	2,226,596
Economically active population	730,591	628,046	1,358,637
Employees	669,643	583,380	1,253,023
Unemployed	60,948	44,666	105,614
Economically inactive population	320,685	547,274	867,959
Labor force participation rate	69.7	53.6	61
Employment rate	63.7	49.6	56.3
Unemployment rate	8.3	7.1	7.8

²¹³ Study report of Technical, Vocational, Educational and Training Sector 2019. Page 52.

The Mongolian population is mostly urbanized. As of 2018, 53.4% of the total population reside in urban areas while 46.6% live in rural and/or remote areas. 51.7% of all soum have up to 3,000 citizens, 30.1% have between 3,000-5,000 citizens, 8.5% have between 5,000-7,000 citizens and only 9.7% have population over 7,000.²¹⁴ The poverty rate stands at 28.4% and has declined in rural areas but remained unchanged in urban areas since 2010.²¹⁵

The biggest employers in Mongolia are in the agriculture sector. In terms of working population by occupation, 30.5% work in agriculture, forestry, fishery and hunting; 16.5% in trade and services, 15.9% are specialists, 9.6% in manufacturing, construction, handcraft and other relevant jobs.²¹⁶

FIGURE 32. Employees by the occupational classification, by sex. NSO. Labor Force Survey 2018

Occupational classification	Total		Male		Female	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total manager	1,132,843	100.0	592,686	100.0	540,157	100.0
Manager	68,406	6.0	39,733	6.7	28,673	5.3
Professionals	180,437	15.9	61,478	10.4	118,959	22.0
Technicians and associate professionals	26,833	2.4	11,818	2.0	15,015	2.8
Clerical support workers	3,097	3.4	9,592	1.6	28,505	5.3
Service and sales workers	187,035	16.5	61,595	10.4	125,440	23.2
Skilled agriculture, forestry and fishery workers	345,281	30.5	191,652	32.3	153,629	28.4
Manufacturing, construction, craft and related trade workers	109,256	9.6	74,982	12.7	34,274	6.4
Plant and Machinery operators and assemblers	93,765	8.3	90,785	15.3	2,980	0.6
Elementary occupations	79,271	7.0	46,706	7.9	32,565	6.0
Armed force occupations	4,462	0.4	4,345	0.7	117	0.0

There are gender-specific barriers that prevent women from entering the labor market and advancing towards senior positions. Women tend to dominate lower-skilled clerical jobs, do not reach managerial positions in the same numbers as men and do not enter manufacturing or construction sectors. Labor force data from 2018 showed 8 out of 10 women were clerical support workers and only 6.8% were plant and machine operators and assemblers.²¹⁷ The unemployment rate among young women is higher than that of young men and is likely to increase year by year. Young women who are married before leaving for employment often find it difficult to find or enter the labor market. Given the data presented earlier on females outperforming males in education outcomes and completion rates (with more females graduating from university), the assumption is that cultural barriers and discrimination play a key role in determining female participation in the labor market.

²¹⁴ Education Sector Medium-term Development Plan 2021-2030. Page 18.

²¹⁵ Education Sector Medium-term Development Plan 2021-2030.

²¹⁶ Study report of Technical, Vocational, Educational and Training Sector 2019. Page 13.

²¹⁷ Technical and Vocational Education and Training Policy Review Mongolia. Page 12.

The export products of Mongolia, largely natural resources, suggest that there is a need to increase the skills of the workforce to offer diverse services and products. 85% of exports are minerals and only 10.6% of the working age population are working in export sectors. Conversely, only 0.04% of exports are high-tech or high knowledge products. There is a need for the education system and labor market to modernize to mitigate the potential job losses of the fourth industrial revolution and for workers to adopt the new skills it will require.²¹⁸

5.2 Education relevance to labor market

Career counseling is encouraging children to pursue higher education but potentially to the detriment of vocational jobs. Career counseling in Mongolia is focused on secondary school stages when children make decisions about elective subjects. Reports indicate that the general trend is to encourage students to sit university entrance exams. There is a clear bias towards higher education over alternatives such as technical and vocational education and training, and a lack of awareness of the shifting needs of the labor market. This practice is also based on the attitudes towards vocational education in Mongolia, especially in urban areas as discussed in Chapter 3. Efficiency and Quality. Under the 2050 Vision proposed by the government of Mongolia, research united within educational institutions will be strengthened to develop relations between employers, professional associations, academia and researchers (activity 2.1.5). Activity 2.6.9 also seeks to improve the coordination between the labor market and education sector. The Such measures could lead to more informative student counseling services.

Employment opportunities are directly correlated to education level and graduates from higher education are the most employable. Among all types of economic activities, the share of the employed population with secondary education was higher than other groups (17.2 - 49.3%). In the agricultural and forest sector, the percentage of the population with incomplete secondary education was relatively higher (26.4 - 33.4%), and 11.2% of the total population employed in these sectors have no formal education. These figures suggest that the majority of nomadic people who are engaged in animal husbandry and agricultural work have low levels of education.²¹⁹

Nine out of ten university and college graduates have full time jobs, and around 60% of graduates are working in the capital city, Ulaanbaatar. Of the graduates who are currently employed, 84% are working full time, 11% are seasonally or periodically employed, and 5% are working part time or have temporary employment.²²⁰ Under the 2050 Vision, there is an activity foreseen to develop the national qualifications framework in cooperation with the professional associations, this could strengthen the coordination and ensure a greater match between employer needs and graduate skills.

A lack of soft skills is creating a growing mismatch between graduates and employer requirements. Upon graduating from the education system, many young Mongolians are not adequately equipped with skills in high demand and one-fifth report that the biggest obstacle to securing a job is education-related.²²¹ The 2017 Barometer survey on labor market demand published by the Labor and Social Research Institute highlighted an emerging shortage of soft skills such as the behavior, job responsibilities, attitudes, and positive behaviors expected by employers. The survey highlights a shortage of workers with sufficient education, professionalism and experience as a challenge for employers but also suggests that job seekers are not satisfied with the work environment and wages on offer.²²²

²¹⁸ Education Finance and Investment Report. Page 61.

²¹⁹ Education Sector Medium-term Development Plan 2021-2030. Page 19

²²⁰ Higher Education Sub-sector. Page 43.

²²¹ Mongolia: Public Expenditure Review. Page 109.

²²² Education in Mongolia: A Country Report. Page 237

Employers hire foreign workers to fill unmet demand for skilled workers. Jobs are available but the skills supply does not meet industry demand due to skills mismatch. The 2011 LECO barometer study found that employers in newly emerging sectors found it difficult to recruit qualified skilled workers. The huge demand for labor in transportation, communication, hotel and restaurants, and construction sectors could not be met. For example, investment projects specified in Mongolia's medium-term plan faced serious labor force shortages in road construction where the available supply of qualified engineers, specialists and skilled workers could only meet half of the overall labor required.²²³ The Vision 2050 sets out measures under activity 2.1.10 to support tertiary educational institutions to support continuous learning of graduates to ensure they are competitive,

Specificities of the TVET sub-sector

Reports suggest that slightly over half of TVET graduates enter the job market in their chosen field of study. Findings of the 2018 Graduate's Employment Tracers Study suggested 70% of graduates from TVET are employed, 12% are unemployed, and 18% are economically inactive.²²⁴ While 75% of the university graduates are employed, 62% of the TVET graduates have found employment and 32% are self-employed. Among TVET graduate, 53% are engaged in professionally relevant jobs, of which, those who graduated in health, energy, and education were more likely to be working in their chosen fields. These figures suggest a need for greater understanding of the labor market vacancies and requirements, and career counselling services connected to the job market.

Employers do not feel that TVET graduates have the right skills for the job. Employers who participated in the 2018 Graduate's Employment Tracers Survey were asked about graduates' practical skills and 6% say that they meet the requirements, 44% consider they meet to a moderate level, and 51% say that they do not meet the requirements.²²⁵ Results were particularly low among heavy vehicle operators, hairdressers, and welders cannot work meeting the relevant requirements.²²⁶ The lack of practical knowhow was coupled with outdated theoretical knowledge and poor soft skills according to new employees. Soft skills considered most deficient included teamwork, communication, working independently, critical thinking, time management, organization and problem solving.²²⁷ In most sectors, additional training is provided to new recruits regardless of their previous education. Reports suggest that employers could play a greater role in the sub-sector to increase the number and quality of the occupational standards, preparing experts and planning for investment.²²⁸

Many TVET graduates have to move to urban areas to find work, and female TVET graduates find it more difficult than men to access the job market. According to the 2018 Graduate's Employment Tracers Survey, one third or 35.3% of the TVET graduates who originate from rural areas now live in Ulaanbaatar, while only 3.6% who originate from Ulaanbaatar move to rural aimag.²²⁹ Among unemployed TVET graduates, 67% are in rural aimag (higher than the figure for higher education graduates-52%). Among unemployed TVET graduates, 66% are women revealing barriers to women accessing employment.²³⁰

²²³ Technical and Vocational Education and Training Policy Review Mongolia. Page 52.

²²⁴ The Research Institute of Labour and social protection (2018). Graduate's employment tracer study – 2018

²²⁵ Research Institute for Labour And Social Protection. (2018). Graduates' employment study-2018: Second year panel study for students graduated from higher education institutions and TVET school in the year of 2015-2016.

²²⁶ Technical and Vocational Education and Training Policy Review Mongolia. Page 43.

²²⁷ Technical and Vocational Education and Training Policy Review Mongolia. Page 51.

²²⁸ Technical and Vocational Education and Training Policy Review Mongolia. Page 73.

²²⁹ Research Institute for Labour And Social Protection. (2018). Graduates' employment study-2018: Second year panel study for students graduated from higher education institutions and TVET school in the year of 2015-2016.

²³⁰ Gender Analysis in Education Sector of Mongolia. Page 99

Specificities of the Higher Education sub-sector

According to a 2018 graduates employment study, most higher education graduates were rated as meeting the expectation of employers. Approximately 70% of graduates meet the required skills for their current job and, according to research, 76% of higher education sub-sector graduates have sufficient skills to perform the professional duties according to reports. However, around 10% of graduates are under-qualified for their work position. According to surveys from 2014-2016, foreign language proficiency is one of the greatest shortcomings among graduates as well as the ability to work in groups.²³¹

The specificities of Mongolia's job market are not captured in the higher education sub-sector, most notably the needs of the agriculture sector. While there are a wide range of qualifications offered in the higher education sub-sector, they do not fit well with the priority areas of economics and labor market in Mongolia. Qualification programs do not reflect the features of the agriculture sector of Mongolia, and do not clearly present what career path graduates could pursue. To better match the learning outcomes with labor market demands, employer engagement and advanced career counselling could be strengthened.

5.3 Education returns

Rising levels of education in Mongolia have put households on a higher earning path in recent years.

Estimated returns of education in 2014 stood at around 9% for each additional year of schooling, with much higher returns for completing a university degree.²³² Despite increases in educational attainment between 2010 and 2014, the better-educated continued to earn more on average and were less likely to be poor. During this period, the proportion of people earning higher incomes rose, contributing to growth in household labor income and boosting income-generating capacity.²³³ As of 2016, 93% of university and college graduates and 75% of other graduates paid social insurance. Furthermore, university and college graduates pay more in social insurance than their counterparts who completed other levels of education. As for individual income tax, 83% pay while 17% do not.²³⁴ The average salary for a higher education graduates has decreased over the past few years. The average monthly salary decreased by 25.4 thousand MNT. Furthermore, 7.8% of HE graduates work 7 days a week.²³⁵

²³¹ Higher Education Sub-sector. Page 44.

²³² World Bank, 2015

²³³ Mongolia: Public Expenditure Review. Page 114.

²³⁴ Higher Education Sub-sector. Page 43.

²³⁵ Higher Education Sub-sector. Page 44.



GOVERNANCE

- 6.1 Policy and Legal frameworks
- 6.2 Governance-related challenges

6. GOVERNANCE

As detailed throughout the report, frequent changes in policy and direction have hampered development of the education sector in terms of access, equity, and efficiency. This section will outline the current governing bodies that guide the development of the sector and their functions.

2050 VISION

- 2.1.1. Improve education management system for evidence-based policy making, development planning, and monitoring and evaluation by regularly conducting the fundamental studies and applied research in the field of education, establishing an information management system covering all data related to education system, such as location of education institutions, capacity, resources, norms and standards, research studies and analysis.
- 2.1.5. Establish the research and innovation support units within the professional education institutions and strengthen the partnerships between employers, professional associations, academia, and researchers.
- 2.1.21. Regularly conduct the factorial analysis of students’ achievements and use its findings for policymaking and planning.
- 2.1.38. Renew the requirements for kindergarten and secondary school administrators, the system for training and appointing administrators, and the schedule of duties, increase the quality assurance function, improve performance appraisal, and improve the management capacity of educational institutions.
- 5.1.5. Establish a framework for evidence-based policy-making that requires at least 70 percent of all policies to be research-based.

The Government of Mongolia has shown a strong political will to increase access and quality of education in Mongolia by designing programs that respond to children’s needs and circumstances of birth. Over the past decade, impressive progress has been made towards universal coverage in basic education with the public education system absorbing most pupils with high participation levels. The education sector must meet certain challenges in order to develop the institutions and processes required to govern, manage and finance the education system as envisioned for 2050.

The education sector is led by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sports, which implements, regulates and coordinates education sector policy, laws and regulations. The Ministry is headed by a Minister of the Government and is divided into four departments: primary and secondary education policy and coordination; higher education and professional education departments; economics and finance department; department of monitoring and evaluation. The main role of MECSS is to:

- organize and ensure nation-wide implementation of legal mandates for education;
- develop a comprehensive and suitable system of education for all, including non-formal education;
- coordinate the activities of those organizations offering various training programs and providing professional help;
- organize and provide in-service training for all educational personnel, putting forward the issues related to social benefits for teachers.

The Ministry provides advice to local governments, defines policy and provides support for the supervision of local educational centers and national universities and collaborates with national and local professional organizations as detailed throughout this report.²³⁶

Life-long Education services are under the management of the MECSS and are governed as a separate sub-sector that provides equivalency programs for out-of-school adults.

Technical and vocational education and training falls under the management of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection and the MECSS. MECSS oversees formal long term TVET (more than two years) while MLSWS oversees the non-formal short term TVET (ranging from two weeks to 45 days).

Sub-national Governments

Aimag level: The Education and Culture department of the aimag governor’s office is mandated to implement state policies and laws, including those applicable to schools and kindergartens. This responsibility extends to the daily management of state and non-state schools and kindergartens. Aimag or city governors oversee the delivery of education services as per responsibilities stated in the Law on Education and each Aimag has an education team. Aimag coordinates with bagh governors to collect and verify data on the number of children of pre-school age, agree on location and timing of mobile kindergartens, and establish expenses of services into the annual budget plan one year ahead.

Soum level: governors at this level establish a performance-based contract with aimag or city governors to provide state educational services.

Bagh and khoroo level: the governor is responsible for enrolling children of households in her area to pre-school and basic educational services.

6.1 Policy and Legal frameworks

Teaching in Mongolia is governed by the following principle laws: Constitution of Mongolia, Law on Education, Law on Pre-school Education, Law on Primary and Secondary Education, Law on TVET, Law on Higher Education, Labor Law, and Law on Promotion of Teachers’ Development.

Mongolia’s Constitution, article 15, states that all citizens shall be guaranteed the right to education regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, sex, religion, social status, and economic conditions. The state shall provide basic general education free of charge.

The Law on Pre-school Education sets out standards for material and resources, as well as evaluation procedures and guidelines for institutions. The Law also sets out measures for alternative services.

The Law on Education, Law on Higher Education, Law on Primary and Secondary Education define policies on the administrative structure of the sub-sectors. The Laws further detail to what extent administrative and financial aspects are decentralized to local governments, most notably in the management of public schools. Non-formal education and the life-long education sub-sector is regulated by the Law on Education.

The Law on Technical and Vocational Education and Training outlines the scope, type, curriculum and standards of the sub-sector, creating a legal environment within which training centers can operate.

²³⁶ World Data on Education. VII Ed. 2010/11. Mongolia. Page 3

Over the past decade, goals set in previous government action plans have focused on issues relating to access, particularly in early childhood education services. Three government action plans have set out targets on rates of enrollment in pre-school education. There has also been a growing focus on improving the quality of services and the level of equality in delivery, in particular to children of herders. There is a growing focus within policies to align the sector with international standards, most notably through participation in the Programme for International Student Assessment scheme.²³⁷

Mongolia's Vision 2050 sets out a path towards a middle-class society with specific goals for education that are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, most notably Goal 4. State programs and policies around education currently detailed in the source reports have focused on the following areas:

- Strengthen cooperation of stakeholders in the governance and management of the sector.
- Increase efficiency of finance and investment;
- Allocate authorization for targeted budget expenditure to local areas;
- Develop multi-sourced financing mechanisms;
- Ensure gender equality;
- Support teachers' professional development

The following section details the shortcoming, challenges and recurring issues identified in the governance of the sector as detailed in the source reports.

6.2 Governance-related challenges

Governing bodies and Coordination

A lack of inter-ministerial coordination mechanism is challenging development in the sector and reducing the efficacy of measures and resources on the ground. One key area where this was highlighted was the low and declining maintenance budgets at the school level, which was attributed to a lack of coordination between departments in MCESS, and unclear guidelines on which budget should cover these costs (recurrent or investment).

The 2050 Vision under activity 2.1.1 to 'Improve education management' is an indicator that the vision will address these recurring issues. It can be particularly effective in the financing of education and in support of evidence-based systems for evidence-based policy making.

The **TVET sub-sector** is consistently highlighted as a problem area in terms of governance and coordination. The governing body, the National Council of Vocational Education, is consistently identified as weak in governance and reporting owing to a lack of permanent staff. The sub-sector was transferred from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sport to the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection in a short period of time has lasting consequences on management and created instability. There is an overall lack of Information on roles, responsibilities and tasks of TVET stakeholders.²³⁸

In the **life-long education sub-sector**, the National Center for Lifelong Education is responsible for developing concepts and guidelines for educational policies and to organize the enforcement of policies at the national level. Reports underline that the Center does not have clear roles and responsibilities, and no allocated budget.²³⁹ The 2050 Vision also sets out under activity 2.1.6 the development of a national qualifications framework in cooperation with the professional associations of various sectors.

²³⁷ Pre-Primary Education Sector Analysis 2019. Page 11.

²³⁸ Study report of Technical, Vocational, Educational and Training Sector 2019. Page 27

²³⁹ Education Sector Medium-term Development Plan. Page 31.

Under activity 2.1.5, the 2050 Vision also seeks to strengthen the coordination between professional associations, employers, academia and researchers through support units.

Lack of data-driven planning & management

As discussed previously, the availability of data has increased with the introduction of the Education Sector Information System, however, there is a lack of capacity to analyze the data and ensure that it is used to inform decision-making and planning.²⁴⁰

Within the 2050 Vision, the government of Mongolia under activity 2.1.6, aims to establish an online comprehensive labor market information system and database of education information system selecting all the data required for technical and tertiary education policy-making. The following activity, 2.1.7 will also aim to improve the quality management of internal monitoring and evaluation at all levels of education. Under activity 2.1.42, an educational management information system at all levels will be implemented, this may be an updated and expanded version of the ESIS addressing many of the challenges outlined in this report and increasing the evidence-based policy development detailed throughout the 2050 Vision.

Human capacity

Reports indicate that the governing and administrative bodies within the sector have limited research capacity due to insufficient staffing numbers and a lack of continuous professional development, most notably in the Mongolian Institute for Education Research, National Council for Education Assessment, and the National Council of Life-life Learning. The shortage is illustrated in the educational institution accreditation process underway in various sub-sectors and the reforms in curricula and assessment. Such conditions are also suspected to contribute to high staff turnover and a lack of continuity within the sector.²⁴¹ For the life-long learning sub-sector, there is only one staff member dedicated to the sub-sector at the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sport and 10 staff members at the National Center for Lifelong Education.²⁴²

The 2050 Vision gives attention to the recruitment and training of managers in the education sector under activity 2.1.37 and encourages the use of performance-based assessments to strengthen management capacity. Such measures may support the further professionalization of the sector.

Lack of autonomy at the local level

Although budget distribution is devolved to local level governments, school managers and local governments have little margin to deviate or respond to shifting needs and priorities. As detailed in Chapter 4. Education Cost and Finance, school managers and local governments require more margin to plan and adjust plans to address demographic shifts, performance challenges in schools and unforeseen circumstances. Managers are not currently able to evaluate and analyze data on performance under their jurisdiction and act accordingly. The advances in data gathering and monitoring may provide a stronger case for further decentralization and the 2050 Vision priority area on regional development may suggest a shift in this direction.

²⁴⁰ Education Sector Medium-term Development Plan. Page 47

²⁴¹ Education Sector Medium-term Development Plan. Page 25.

²⁴² Sub-Sector Study Report on Life-long Education 2019. Page 10

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Annex 1.
Vision 2050 Chapter mapping

1. Common national values

- 1.5.2. Provide integral and coherent health, cultural, arts and education services corresponding to the age and level of maturity in maintaining life-long development of the citizen of Mongolia beginning from conception. [all chapters]

2. Human Development

- 2.1.1. Improve education management system for evidence-based policy making, development planning, and monitoring and evaluation by regularly conducting the fundamental studies and applied research in the field of education, establishing an information management system covering all data related to education system, such as location of education institutions, capacity, resources, norms and standards, research studies and analysis. [Governance]
- 2.1.4. Strengthen the funding mechanisms of the educational institutions and utilize them for improving the learning environment where everyone would learn successfully. [Education Cost and Finance]
- 2.1.5. Establish the research and innovation support units within the professional education institutions and strengthen the partnerships between employers, professional associations, academia, and researchers. [External Efficiency, Governance]
- 2.1.6. Establish an independent national council for human resources policy; develop and implement the national qualifications framework in cooperation with the professional associations of the various sectors; establish an online comprehensive labor market information system; and set up the mechanism of updating the database of the Education information system collecting all the data required for technical and tertiary education policy-making and effective utilization. [Efficiency and Quality]
- 2.1.7. Improve the quality management of overall internal monitoring and evaluation system and foster a culture of internal monitoring and evaluation making at all levels of the educational institutions. [Efficiency and Quality]
- 2.1.8. Strengthen the monitoring and evaluation institutional structure by transferring to the independent monitoring system that uses internationally accepted methodologies for quality assurance of educational institutions and teaching and training programs. [Efficiency and Quality]
- 2.1.9. Develop universities, technical colleges, vocational education centers as the local and regional human development centers, strengthen the open and flexible lifelong education system for everyone and all social sectors. [Efficiency and Quality]
- 2.1.10. Set up a system, where the universities, technical colleges, and vocational education centers be responsible for supporting and continuously updating professional knowledge and skills of their graduates by increasing the accessibility and availability of lifelong learning services, by encouraging multisectoral partnerships to develop and implement the training programs for life skills training for adults, new skills building, and skills upgrading and mastery. [External Efficiency]

- 2.1.11. Provide necessary support and equitable access to education for those who are out of the education system, out of school, and lagging learners. [Education Access, Equity]
- 2.1.12. Improve the infrastructures required for educational institutions at all levels, create an equitable and accessible educational environment that meets the standards and quality requirements. [Education Access, Education Cost and Finance]
- 2.1.14. Set the mechanism, where, the estimated average daily dietary intake of essential nutrients, vitamins, and minerals of children aged 1 to 3 and 4 to 6 years at kindergartens updated annual basis, in case of the allocated fund is not sufficient enough to meet the daily nutritional requirements of children, mobilize additional funds from parents and legitimate guardians of children. [Education Cost and Finance]
- 2.1.13. Facilitate a series of activities aimed at improving the quality of pre-school services and training, agreeing with pre-school learning is an essential and fundamental stage of child development. [Efficiency and Quality]
- 2.1.15. Provide opportunities and conditions for equal access to preschool education to children of herder, migrant, low-income families and children with disabilities and special needs and promote the participatory child development through improving the education of their parents. [Education Access, Efficiency and Quality]
- 2.1.16. Provide conditions for kindergarten teachers to be able to improve their teaching quality, develop and implement teaching activities, observe children, study, and self-develop. Two-shift teachers will be assigned to each class with a size of more than 30 children starting from 2021, but beginning in 2023, to every class. [Efficiency and Quality]
- 2.1.18. Establish a legal framework that aimed to increase the quality and accessibility of child-care facilities for children aged 1-2 years and adopt and enforce the regulatory requirements and standards for child care service providers. [Education Access, Equity, Efficiency and Quality]
- 2.1.19. Create an enabling environment for educational institutions as per required standards by improving the school dormitory, green development facilities, sports and art halls, canteen, and information technology classrooms following the specific rules, provide an accessible learning environment for those students with disabilities, and make the child and user-friendly, safe water, toilet, hygiene facilities available in schools. [Education Access, Equity, Education Cost and Finance, Efficiency and Quality]
- 2.1.20. Improve the quality of education from the primary and secondary schools and the teaching contents and methods reflecting the Mongolian history, language, culture, national heritage, customs, patriotic views, personality formation and development, dual language, and universal values of humanity. [Efficiency and Quality, Equity]
- 2.1.24. Improve the management of the school dormitory system and child protection at the dormitories, setting the regulations that up to 10 teaching hours of those teachers who worked in the pieces of training and other activities for dormitory students to include in teachers' overall workload. [Equity, Efficiency and Quality]
- 2.1.29. Revise the classifications of training programs offered by the universities, and vocational and professional technical education institutions in line with the admission policies and labor force forecasts. [External Efficiency]

- 2.1.32. Implement a comprehensive human resources policy in the education sector, establish a system that creates an opportunity to identify the career development and professional development as per the capability-oriented merit system principles, ensure gender balance in human resources, and provide housing for teachers who are coming to work in local areas. [Efficiency and Quality]
- 2.1.34. Develop the teachers' standards for all school levels based on the skills and knowledge required for the subject areas such as professional knowledge, teaching methods, research skills, ICT, foreign languages, etc., and implement them in line with teacher's development and human resource policies. [Efficiency and Quality]
- 2.1.35. Train and regularly re-train the elementary school teachers and specialized teachers required for the general education institutions as per population growth dynamics. [Efficiency and Quality]
- 2.1.36. Renew the workload standards for teachers of kindergartens and general education institutions taking into account their duties, responsibilities, and workplace, make the standards more flexible, introduce the performance-based assessment of teachers' work, improve the pay and reward system for teachers, and gradually improve the real salary of teachers ensuring that teacher's salaries to be among the top 10% of the national average salary scale. [Education Cost and Finance, Efficiency and Quality]
- 2.1.37. Establish the quality assurance procedures and criteria for the training of teachers, improve the requirements for training curricula, and strengthen the periodical teacher's certification and licensure system of the educational institutions. [Efficiency and Quality]
- 2.1.38. Renew the requirements for the management personnel of the kindergartens and general education institutions; the training and appointment system of the management personnel for educational institutions; and the terms of references for the management personal adding more duties on functions of quality assurance of teaching; and improve the performance-based assessment, and strengthen the management capacity of the educational institutions. [Efficiency and Quality]
- 2.1.39. Reform the professional development system of teachers and staff members of educational institutions, and strengthen the support mechanisms for teachers' self-development. [Efficiency and Quality]
- 2.1.40. Establish the teachers' training centers based on tertiary education institutions by strengthening the institutions that support teachers' professional development and training methods. [Efficiency and Quality]
- 2.1.41. Promote multisectoral involvement in training and retraining of teachers and human resources of educational institutions by expanding the participation of the government, non-governmental, private educational institutions. [Efficiency and Quality]
- 2.1.42. Develop and implement an education management information system at all levels, and use the information for policy, planning, and implementation, monitoring activities of the education sector, and ensure information security, regularly. Train the human resources and establish the education information unit at the scientific and research institutes responsible for rendering of information services for users. [Governance]

- 2.1.43. Establish an open education system, develop an integrated online and distance learning platform, and introduce online training at the educational institutions of all levels. Develop and deliver online learning programs and contents (Massive open online courses and Open educational resources) for the learners and citizens of all ages, and recognize and support the nonformal education system. [Education Access]
- 2.1.44. Improve teachers’ capacity and skills in the use of ICT in teaching, facilitation of online and distance learning programs, and the English language. Upgrade the ICT training curriculum and content up to the internationally accepted level for training on electronic literacy and cybersecurity of the learners. Intensify ICT skills building training and other activities for citizens and the general public, and encourage the participation of all types of training organizations in the training. [Efficiency and Quality]
- 2.3.10. Create and develop the Student Labor Exchange to facilitate the employment of students. [External Efficiency]
- 2.6.9 Strengthen the systems that define a national qualifications’ framework and balance the supply and demand for the labor market. [External Efficiency]

3. Quality of Life and Middle Class

- 3.1.25 Facilitate targeted skills building and vocational training for household heads and adults of poor households, who are less educated and unemployed in a frame of implementation of policies on vocational skills development. [Equity]
- 3.1.16 Enable support system targeting primary school age children of poor families by creating a fund of primary education textbooks, providing services for textbook leasing and rotational use of textbooks, offering discounts on school uniforms and ensuring that the state can bear a certain portion of living costs in dormitories and travel expenses. [Equity, Education Cost and Finance]
- 3.1.17 Create equal opportunities for children of poor families to access to kindergartens and general education schools, and scholarship programs of vocational education and diploma training to enable them to grow as an educated Mongolian free from poverty. [Equity]

5. Governance

- 5.1.5. Establish a framework for evidence-based policy-making that requires at least 70 percent of all policies to be research-based. [[Efficiency and Quality, Governance]

9. Ulaanbaatar and Satellite City

- 9.1.1 To ensure accessibility of pre-school education to young children, increase the number of kindergarten facilities and child beds gradually following the demand and supply, keep the class size at required standards. [Access, Education Cost and Finance, Efficiency and Quality]
- 9.1.2 Ensure realization of learning standards in kindergartens and schools. [Efficiency and Quality]

